BIRZ COMICS SPECIAL

東京異聞

とうけいいぶん

スペシャル版

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一

[作画] 梶原にき

[原作] 小野不由美

幻冬舎コミックス

ISBN978-4-344-81268-0

C9979 ¥900E

9784344812680

1929979009007

雑誌 54247-56

定価：本体900円+税

発行＝幻冬舎コミックス

発売－幻冬舎

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〔作画〕梶原にき Kajiwara Niki

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（新潮文庫「東京異聞」より）

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Prologue: Turbulent Times in the Imperial Capital (Part 1)

THE CITY EMERGED FROM MUD AND QUICKLY GREW.
IT STARTED AS A HARBOR AND FED ON THE DESPAIR, DEATH, AND THE ENDLESS FRENZY OF THE ERA.
IT CONTINUED TO SWELL, AND IN 1868, THE FIRST YEAR OF THE MEIJI ERA, ITS NAME CHANGED FROM EDO TO TOKYO.
THE FOLLOWING YEAR, TOKYO BECAME THE CAPITAL. IT WAS TO BE THE CENTER OF POWER.
AND THAT WAS WHAT BECAME OF THE CITY OF MUD.

Prologue: Turbulent Times in the Imperial Capital (Part 1)

29 years
after the
birth of the
Imperial
Capital,
Tokyo.

lately, things have become somewhat unsettled.
Queer peddlers and queer murders are afoot.
Alas,
Tap
Oh my. Could they be the work of some spirit?
I'm not sure if we can assume that.
The deepest darkness always lurks
within the hearts of men.

Whether they be the works of spirits or men,
Smirk
I shall tell you about Kawara-machi.

North of Asakusa Kayacho district, Kawara-machi...
Yes, that small house. It is rented to a man,
the head entertainer in the district. His name is Manzou.
However, that is not his real name.
It came from his former occupation as a handy man.
No one knows his real name, for it is not needed.
Why that seems so queer.
Step
Step

One of Manzou's frequent visitors was a man called Hirakawa.
HI, MANZOU-KUN.
A journalist working for Teito Nippou. He became acquainted with Manzou in his search for new material.
AH, HIRA-KAWA-SAN. DID SOME-THING HAPPEN?

YEAH.
YESTERDAY I HEARD AN INTERESTING RUMOUR.
Here.
The actors are starting to take their places on the stage.
CLAP

SOBA, PLEASE.
BUT I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT.
NOT AT ALL.
FORTU-NATELY, I DIDN'T PUT OUT THE FIRE YET.

ARE YOU A NATOU PEDDLER?
DO I APPEAR AS SUCH?
I AM A DIVINER.
SHAKA
WOW!
THIS IS MY FIRST TIME SEEING A DIVINER LIKE YOU, OJI-SAN.
IS THAT SO?
THEN, AS A TOKEN OF APOLOGY FOR DELAYING YOUR RETURN HOME, ALLOW ME TO READ YOUR FATE.
COULD YOU?

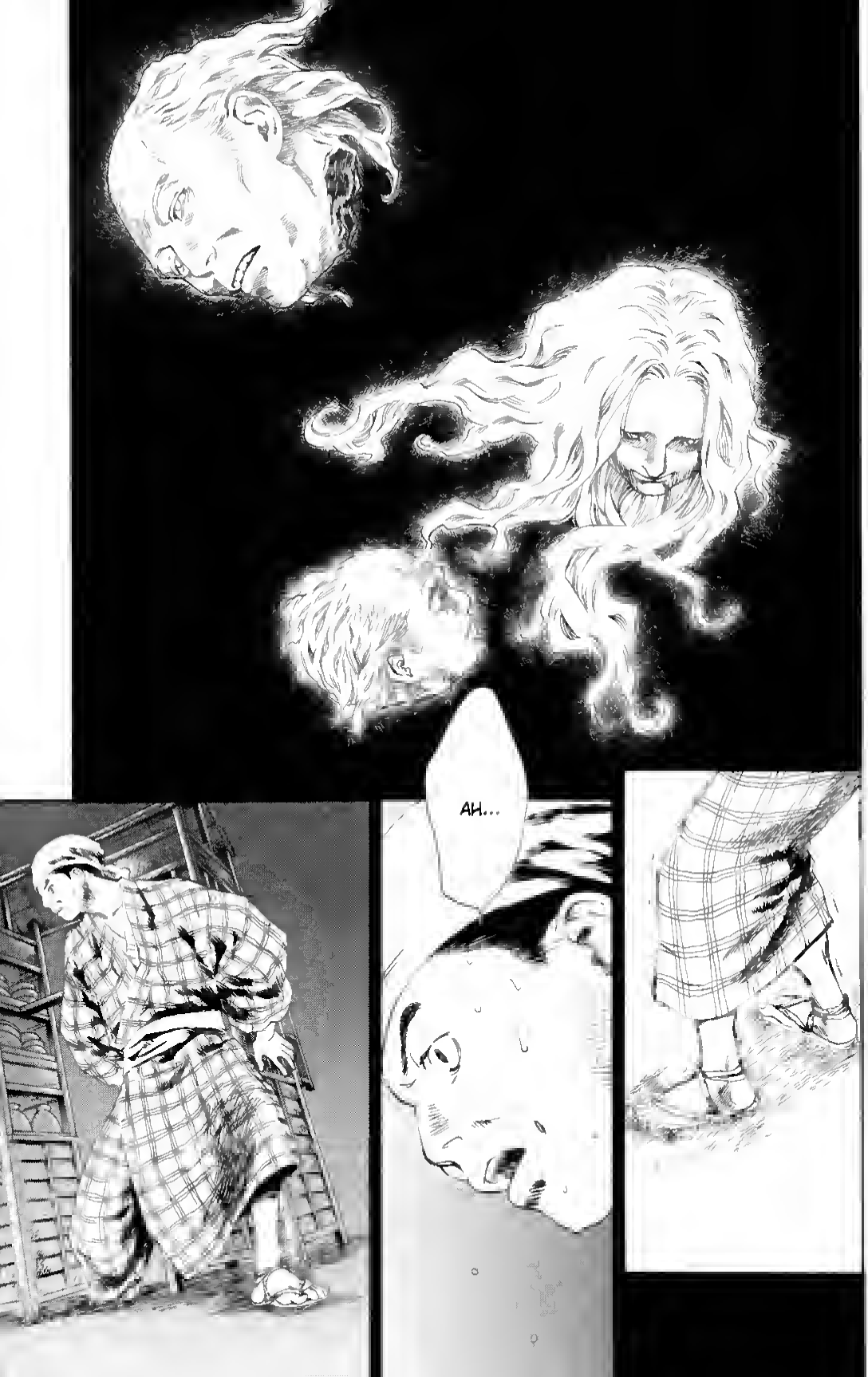
HERE YOU GO.
HOW'S MY FORTUNE, OJI-SAN?
.....
SIP
SIP
I SUPPOSE HE DIDN'T REALLY MEAN IT.
SIP
YOU SAID YOU WERE BORN ON THE 8TH OF AUGUST?

YEAH.
IF YOU WERE BORN AT 5 IN THE MORNING,
YOU WILL DIE TONIGHT.

IF I KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT, I WOULDN'T HAVE ASKED YOU TO READ IT.
OJI-SAN!
WHAT AN EVIL THING HE SPOKE OF...

WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

THAT'S...

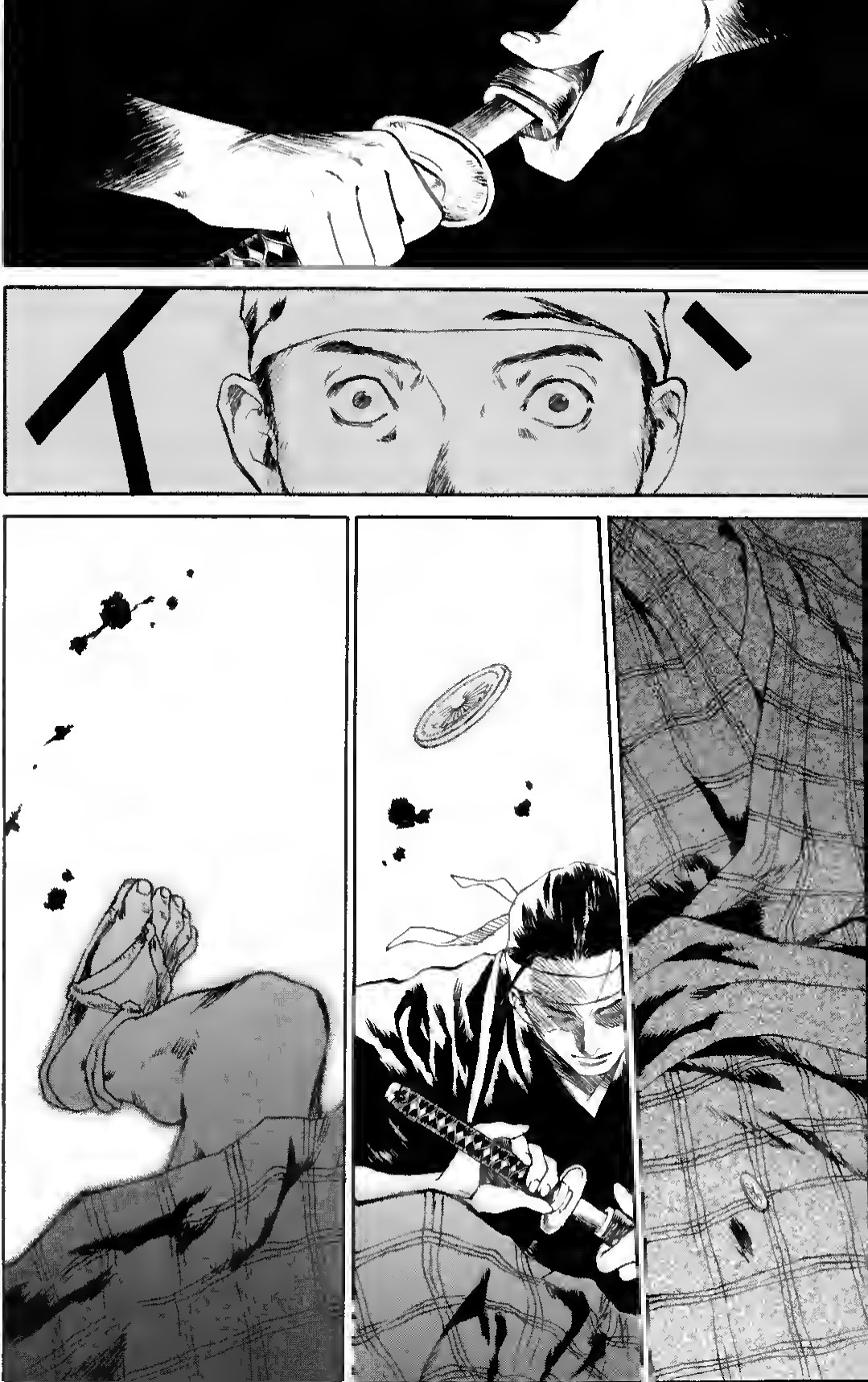

AH...

*The heads of people randomly killed by samurai in the street.
AHHH!
HELP ME!
IT'S JUST SOME *KUBI-TSUKAI.
SO WHAT IF I WAS BORN AT 5?
SUCH A POOR REAC-TION,
SOBA SELLER.
HUH?

TOSS A COIN OR TWO AND THEY WILL DISAPPEAR.
AN IAIDO SWORD PERFOR-MER...
THEY
LIKE TO FOLLOW ME AROUND.

DO YOU WANT TO SEE MY PERFOR-MANCE TOO?
...WHAT A SICK SHOW.
Pat
Pat
PLEASE STOP JOKING AROUND.
I JUST WANT TO GO HOME AND...
OF THE 8 TYPES OF MILITARY ARTS.

SHORT SWORD FIGHTING IS AN ART THAT ANYONE CAN PERFECT ON THEIR OWN.
YET, THE WAY I DRAW MY SWORD CANNOT BE COPIED NOR MATCHED BY ANY OTHER.
STOP FOOLING AROUND...
REACH OF 197CM, THE SKILL WITH WHICH I TURN MY WAIST...
LET'S HOPE IT GOES SMOOTHLY.
!



Oh, I cannot bear to hear any~ more.
That is the end.
Rumours say that afterwards his head could be seen flying alongside the Kubitsukai.
The night is truly terrify~ ing.

Surely such is night.
In spite of its calmness, many baneful things dwell within its cloak.
Some days ago, there was a flaming demon.
hehe
Haha
Oh, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
Haha
Hehe

TO THE BATH-ROOM.
PHEW.
I MIGHT HAVE HAD A BIT TOO MUCH DRINK.
IS THERE SOME-WHERE I CAN FEEL A BREEZE?
OH, HERE.

ARE YOU A NEWS SELLER?
ON BUSINESS OR JUST HAVING FUN?
CERTAINLY, ON BUSINESS.
TATUMIDOU'S ROOF TERRACES ARE PUBLIC SPACES, SO I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE TO DO BUSINESS THERE.
UNFORTUNATELY, NO ONE WAS AROUND.
I SEE,
THEN LET ME HAVE A COPY.
THERE IS NO CHARGE.

A STRANGE, ASTONISHING, REMARKABLE TALE.
ONLY FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT WILL I SELL MY NEWS-PAPER.
WHAT?
I WOULD LIKE A STORY AS PAYMENT.
I CAN'T THINK OF ANY LIKE THAT...
IN THAT CASE, LET US PART AND SEE IF WE MEET AGAIN,
PERCHANCE.
WHAT A WEIRD NEWS SELLER.
Strange & Fantastic News

THIS IS IMPRES-SIVE.
WHAT A NICE VIEW.
THIS BREEZE IS HELPING ME TO SOBER UP TOO
OH, SO SOME-ONE IS HERE.
WAIT... HE SAID...

Hiss
THAT THERE WAS NO ONE...
Hisss——
!?
SFX:FWOOSH
AH...
WAUH!

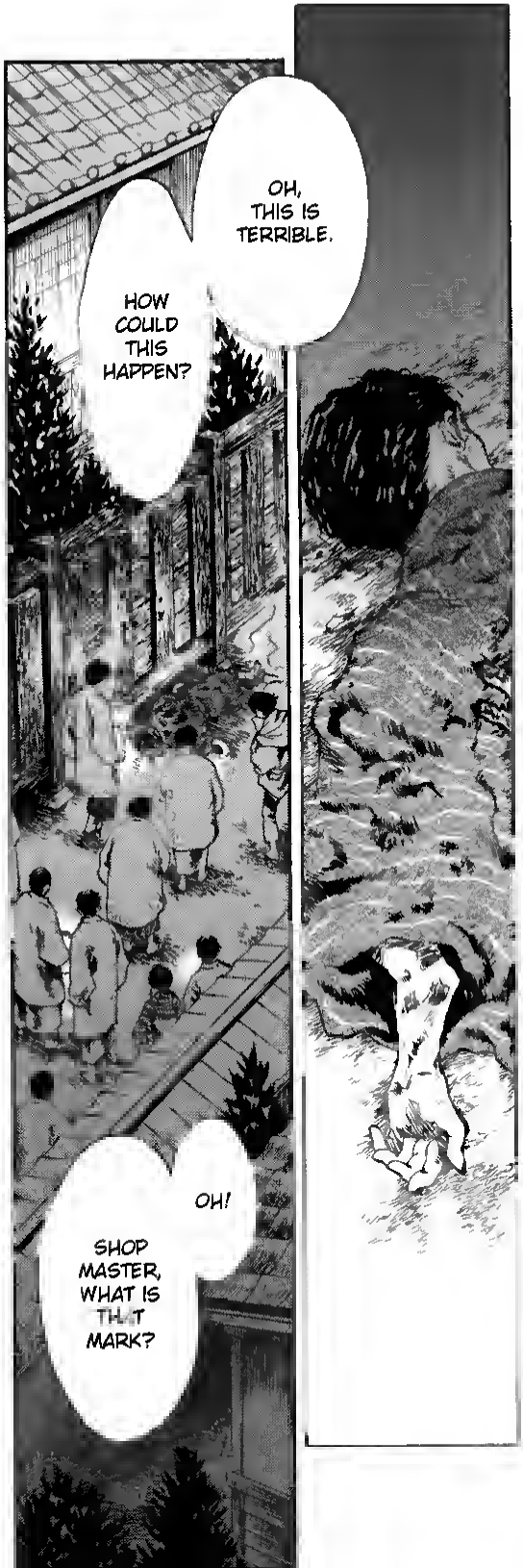
WHA...
AHHHH~!

DID I HEAR SOME-THING?
?

..WHAT...
IS...
THAT...?

HE'S BURNING, BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE IS IN PAIN.
IS HE TATUMIDOU'S NEW ADVERTISER?
USING FIRE ON A WOODEN BUILDING IS OUTRAGEOUS.
HEY, YOUNG MAN!
DID YOUR PEOPLE EMPLOY HIM?
ISN'T IT A BIT TOO MUCH?
Shock
OY!
WHO THE HELL ARE YA!?
WHAT IS ALL THIS RUCKUS?

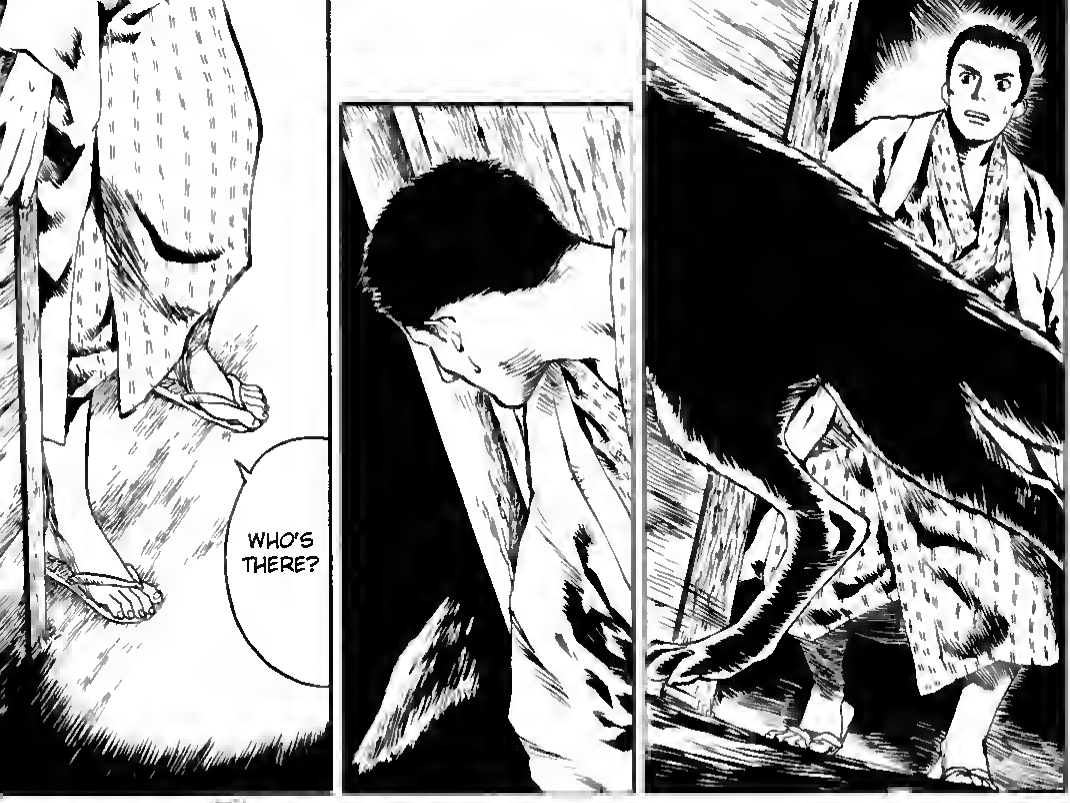
ARE YOU TRYING TO BURN DOWN ALL OF YANAGIBASHI?
TATUMIDOU, THIS IS TOO RECKLESS ON A WINDY NIGHT LIKE THIS.
DANNA-SAMA, PLEASE LOOK!
WHAT IS THAT?
OF COURSE NOT!
I NEVER HIRED A MAN LIKE THAT.
TATUMIDOU-SAN!
SOMEONE RUN UP THERE WITH SOME WATER!
I FOUND A BODY BEHIND THE BUILDING!
HE SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN FROM THE ROOF TERRACE!


OH, THIS IS TERRIBLE.
HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?
OH!
SHOP MASTER, WHAT IS THAT MARK?

THOSE ARE...
HAND-PRINTS?
THE SCORCHED IMPRINT...
OF HANDS...?
ON THE BACK.
!!
THAT BURNING FIGURE!
And what happened to that flaming demon?
The only thing left behind were the marks of scorched foot-prints on the wooden floor.
He was already gone.

The papers of the following day loudly proclaimed that a flaming demon roamed the Imperial Capital.
Three had died, all killed in the same way. I hope there shall not be a fourth.
Truly.
Meanwhile, there are rumours of Her Highness of Darkness...

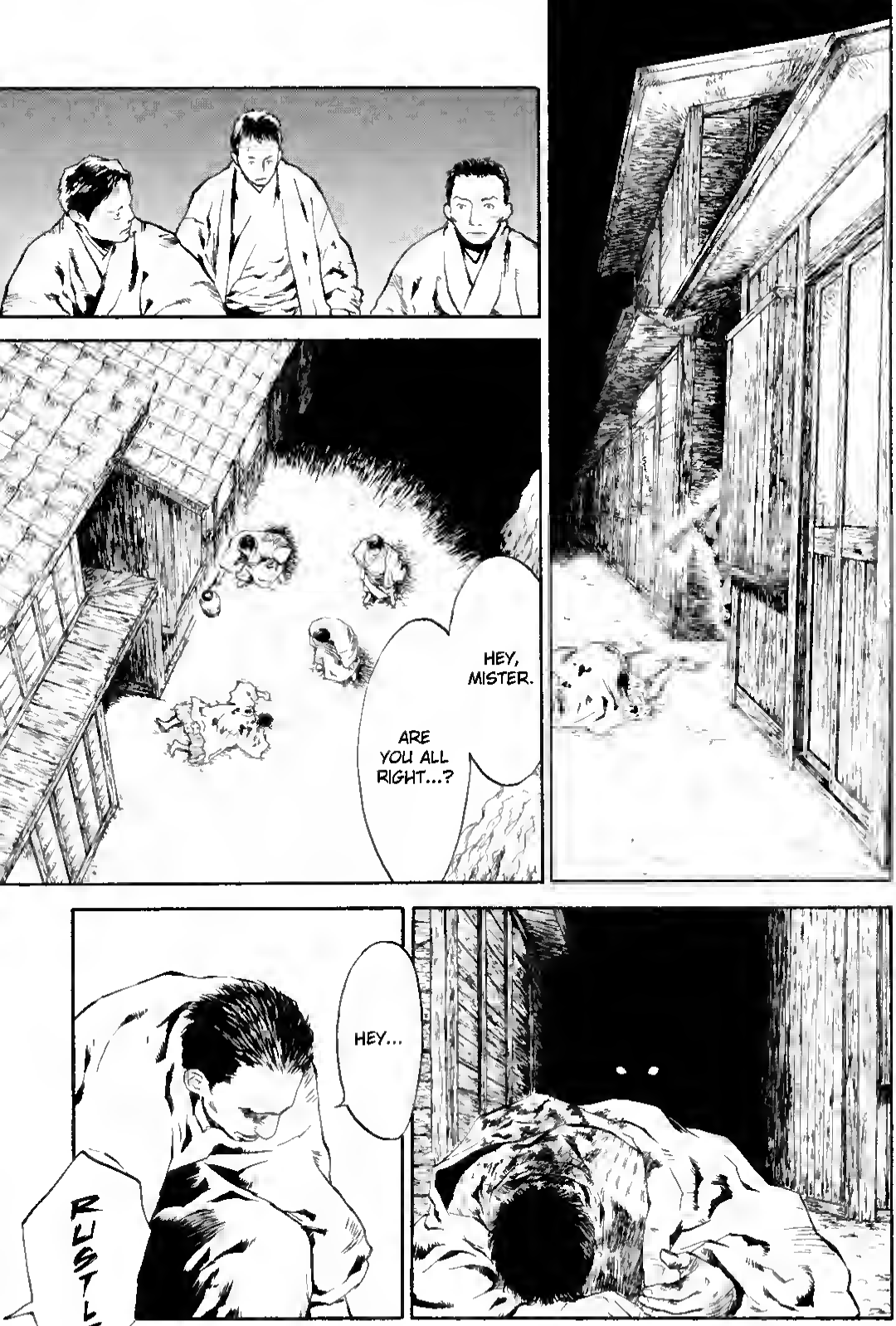
YOU HAVE A FAIR SINGING VOICE.
AND FINE TASTES.
!
THIS THING?
NO, IT CAN'T BE.
Rustle



If the flame demon was the flower of the night.

OH LADY THERE, WHO MIGHT YOU BE?
Then Her Highness is the flower of darkness.

WAIT ...!
!!
HEY!?
..D-DON'T COME ANY CLOSER...
Shock


HEY, MISTER.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...?
HEY...
RUSTLE

DASH
WHOA!
A DOG? NO...
IS IT A BLACK FOX?

The three men ran behind the lodge to chase after the woman in red. But she had disappeared and they were unable to find her.
The same incident occurred five more times.
Only one person survived.
The man died three days later.
All of the victims had the same wound, as if they had been gouged by claws.
Every time, that black beast was seen nearby.

Note: In Japanese folklore, foxes are known to be able to shape-shift into human from
It was either a fox or someone's transformation*.
Either way, the woman in red may be the origin of Her Highness Shizuka.
And Her Highness of Darkness.
Oh,
a child is walking alone on the night road...

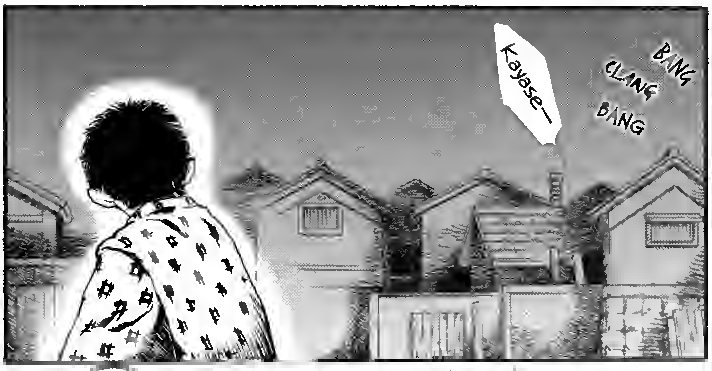
T/N: Shizuka Gozen (Her Highness Shizuka) is one of the most famous women in Japanese literature and history. She was the mistress of the samurai, Minamoto no Yoshitsune. The name, Her Highness of Darkness (Yamigozen) is derived from this person.

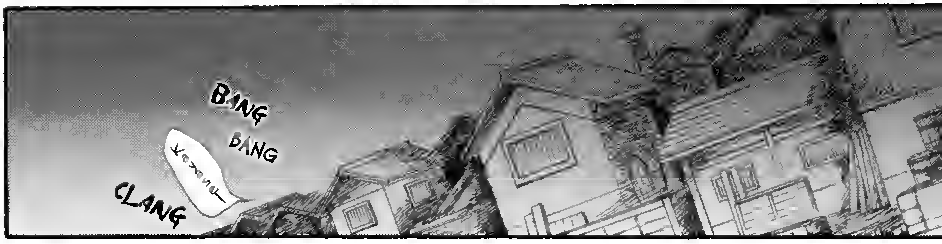
Prologue: Turbulent Times in the Imperial Capital (Part 2)

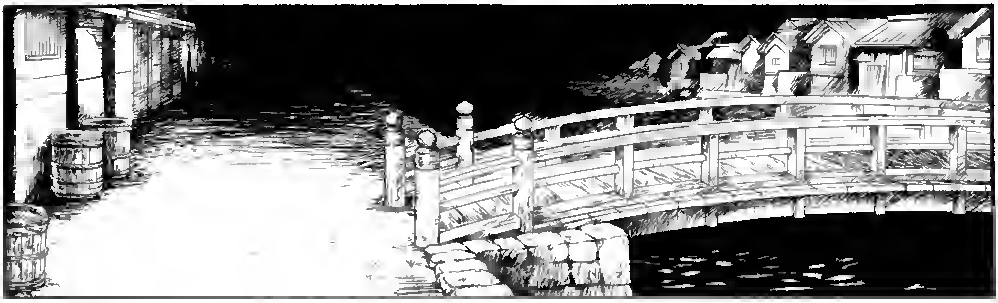
Step Step

Kayase—
Kayase—

T/N: They're making noise so the missing child can hear them.







SOME-
ONE'S
THERE.
Whew
Step
Step
Step
Haa
Haa
...FIRE-
FLIES?
BUT THAT
SIZE IS...

That's the human soul seller.
!
Flinch
He steals souls and uses them for fun.
Now, child, where are you going?

This child
delivered a bento to his father who works on a ship in Silver Town.
Alone on this night road. How admirable.
Truly. What great filial piety.
Even the human soul seller let this child go.
If he was simply having too much fun playing that he forgot to go home
his soul would have been kneaded into a ball and thrown into the sack.

The constant shaking ensures that the souls forget they will be an offering.
The sack was crafted from a monk's clothes.
It smells of incense, but there are also incantations imbued in it.
Hehe
What a well-crafted plan.
Right?
Be careful on the way home.
Quickly, quickly, without stopping.

clench
You're pretty cruel.
It's better if he knows.

Lately you cannot let your guard down on the streets at night.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I'VE THOUGHT THINGS STRANGE, BUT THIS IS A FIRST.
I NEVER THOUGHT THAT THOSE STREET PERFORMERS MIGHT BE INVOLVED.
SO THEY'RE THINGS THAT EVEN MANZOU-KUN DOESN'T KNOW OF?

ALTHOUGH IT APPEARS THAT HE IS USING A BUNRAKU DOLL.
HOWEVER, THE BLACK-CLAD MAN ISN'T A PUPPETEER.
IT IS UNLIKELY HE'S USING SUCH AN EXPENSIVE DOLL FOR HIS ACT.
YES. I UNDERSTAND SHOWS, BUT NOT STREET PERFORMANCES.
WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY ORIGINATED FROM.
WHAT ABOUT THE HUMAN SOUL SELLER?
IT WAS PROBABLY A TRICK.
IT'S TOO EARLY TO CATCH FIREFLIES, SO IT'S BETTER TO THINK OF THIS AS SOME NEW KIND OF SHOW.

I AGREE.
EVEN THE MEN WHO VISIT THE TEA SHOP AT NIGHT HAVE STARTED GROUPING TOGETHER FOR SAFETY.
THEY'RE DANGEROUS, THAT'S NO MISTAKE.
THEN THERE'S THE MATTER OF THE SWORD PERFORMER, THE FLAMING DEMON, AND HER HIGHNESS OF DARKNESS.
BUT MANY CHILDREN HAVE GONE MISSING.
BUT IT'S STRANGE, HIRAKAWA-SAN.
THE FIREFLY SELLER AND THE PUPPETEER WERE BOTH SEEN IN SUCH DESOLATE PLACES.
RIGHT!
THAT'S RIGHT, MANZOU-KUN!

THIS IS A SURPRISE.
LADY, WHO ARE YOU?

IF THEY WERE PUTTING ON A NIGHT PERFORMANCE, THEY WOULD HAVE PICKED A PLACE WITH LOTS OF PEOPLE.
IT WASN'T A NORMAL PERFORMANCE.
ALSO, NO ONE WAS MISSING THEIR WALLETS. THEY AREN'T THIEVES LOOKING FOR MONEY.
I DIDN'T THINK THE INCIDENTS WERE THAT SUSPICIOUS,
BUT MAYBE THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING TERRIBLE.
NOT ONLY THAT. THE FLAMING DEMON AND HER HIGHNESS OF DARKNESS...
THEY'RE MURDERERS, NOT ACTORS.

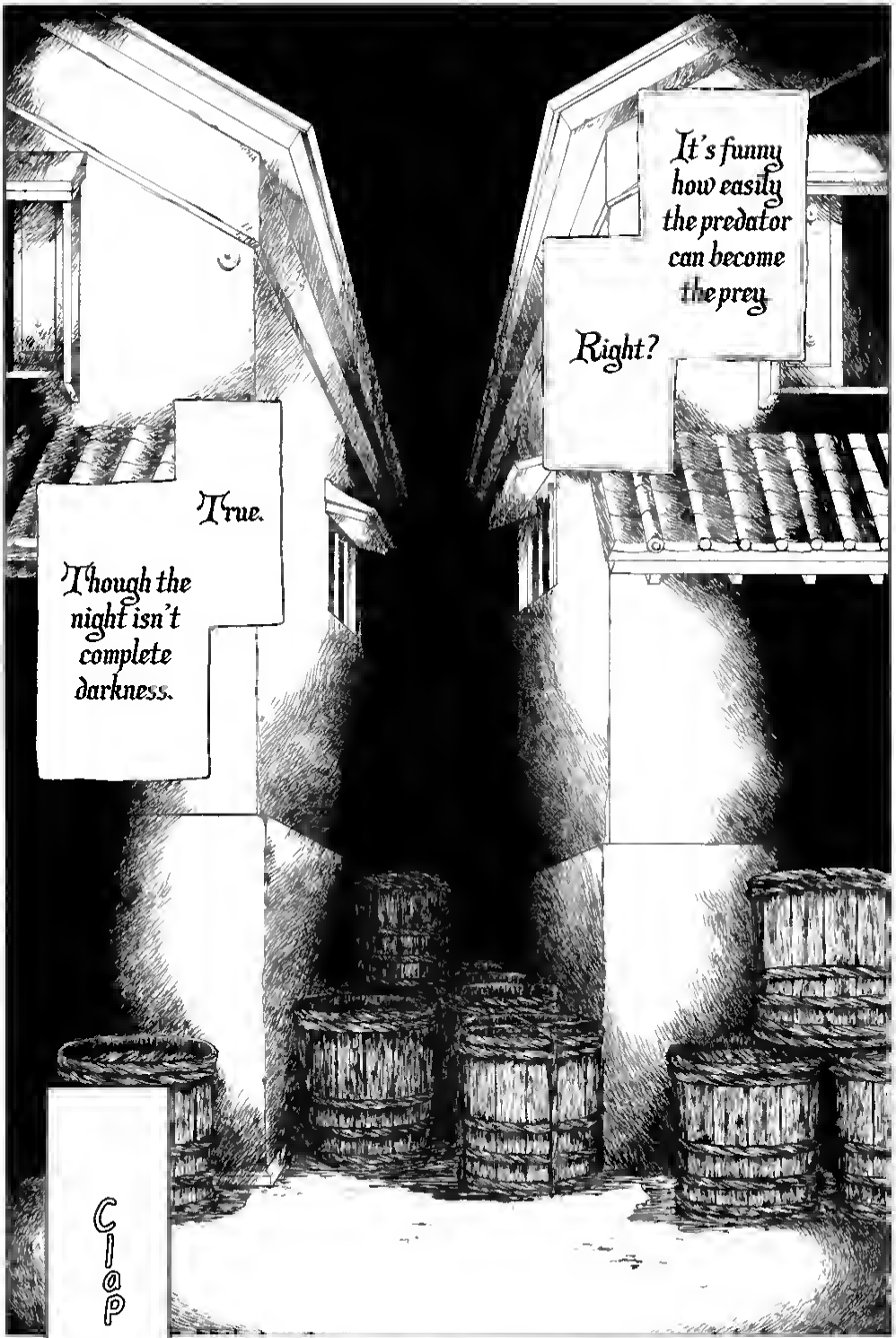
IT COULD BE A DEMON RAMPAGE OR SOMETHING ELSE,
BUT I THINK THIS IS WORTH INVESTIGATING.
TRUE.
YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT.
WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD INVESTIGATE FIRST?
THE FASTEST WAY WOULD BE TO CAPTURE THOSE PERFORMERS.
I WOULD LIKE A MORE PEACEFUL WAY...
THEN,

THERE COULD BE SOME KIND OF CONNEC-TION.
BUT THERE ARE TOO MANY VICTIMS FOR THAT.
IF THEIR MOTIVE ISN'T MONEY, IT COULD BE A GRUDGE.
AND THEN?
HIRAKAWA-SAN, YOU LOOK FOR THE FLAMING DEMON AND HER HIGHNESS OF DARKNESS.
EVERY MAN TO HIS TRADE. I'LL SPEAK TO THE PERFORMERS.
THAT'S TRUE.
Nod Nod
WE MAY BE ABLE TO FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
IF WE STUDY THE INCIDENTS AND GATHER MORE SPECIFIC INFORMATION,

I'M GLAD THAT
MANZOU-KUN IS GOING TO HELP ME.
IF YOU DON'T MIND ME, I'LL BE GLAD TO HELP.
IF THE NIGHTS CONTINUE TO BE THIS DANGEROUS, MY BUSINESS WON'T PROSPER.
ALSO...

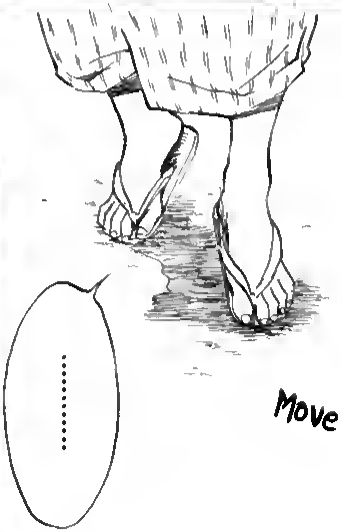
I wonder what will happen next.
Indeed.
THOSE SUSPICIOUS PEOPLE MADE ME DOUBT ALL THE OTHER MERCHANTS.
I CAN'T ENDURE IT ANYMORE.
If you fish in a dark river, you may catch a carp or a crucian.
But you may also catch a river monster.

*A crucian is a type of carp that is inferior to the common kind.


It's funny how easily the predator can become the prey.
Right?
True.
Though the night isn't complete darkness.
Clap

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?
THEN, COME A LITTLE CLOSER.

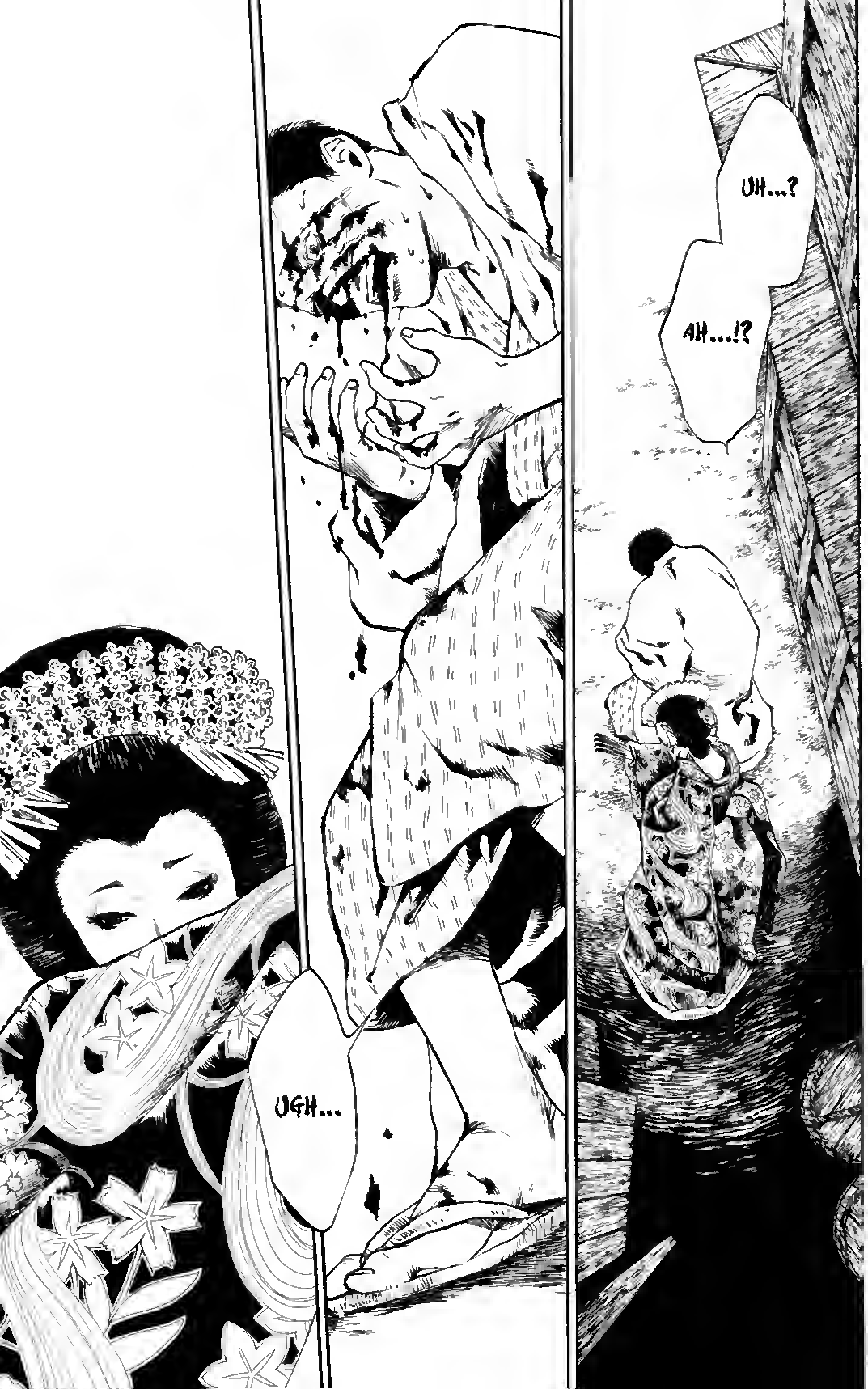
NOW...


.....
Move

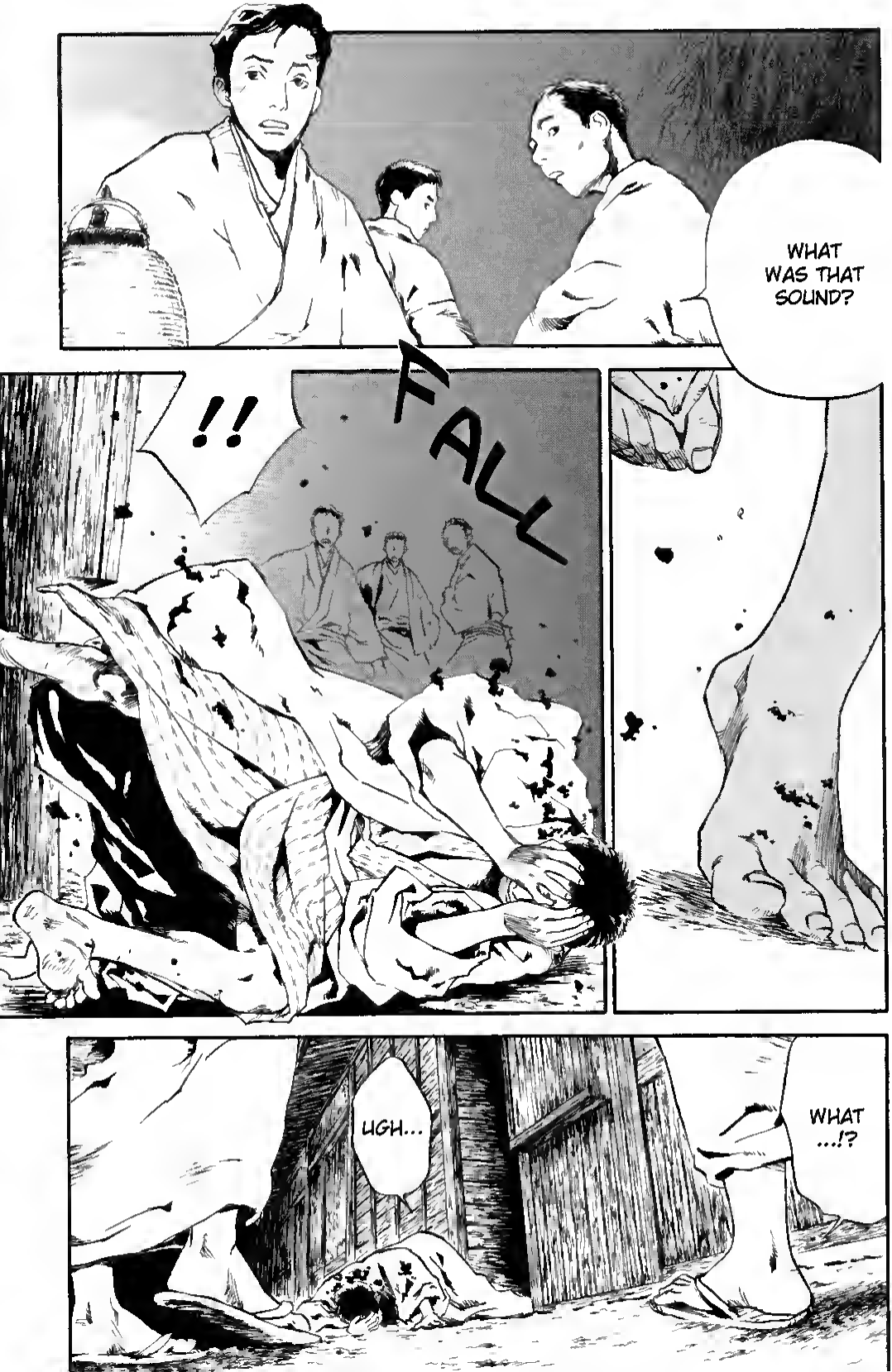
COME CLOSER.
...HMM.

DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE BEEN WALKING AROUND THIS DANGEROUS PLACE?
MISS.
WHAT A BEAUTY.

HUH?


UH...?
AH...!?
UGH...

AHHHH!!


WHAT WAS THAT SOUND?
!!
FALL
UGH...
WHAT ...!?

Act 1: On the beauty of darkness (Part 1)

I have always thought it mysterious.

Which is right? The day or the night?
Or perhaps both are right, with the constant repetition of day and night.
Why would you ask such a thing?
If the cycle of dark and light, day and night, is correct,
then naturally, the same would be true for the human heart, wouldn't you agree?

But humans disapprove when one's heart falls into darkness.
They believe that staying in the light is correct.
I have jealousy in me.
That is just the dusk that falls over the human heart.
True darkness is a blacker
and much more tranquil thing.
Pulls

Ahh.
Maybe no one knows what the light truly is?
Even if everyone thinks it is day, it may actually be night.
One might mistake a street lit by gas lamps for day.
If you are to speak of the night, there are many stories about it.
Yet, you only speak of my philosophy.
You do not really understand, do you?
Sigh

If there exists a human stained in darkness,
Would such a person look like a monster?
Or would it perhaps look like a Bodhisattva?
wouldn't you want to meet it?

All the more so if it were a woman.
If it were a woman, she would become your sister.
If it were a man, he would be captivated by you.
I do not desire either.

You should not show jealousy in this way.
How-ever,
I cannot help being attracted by the darkness.

The darkness of the human heart...
WHERE ARE YOU GOING IN SUCH A HURRY?

.....
HOW COLD-HEARTED.

WHAT ARE-
AH...

MANZOU-KUN!
ARE YOU HERE?
HER HIGH-NESS OF DARKNESS APPEARED.

WERE YOU STILL ASLEEP?
WHAT IS IT?
I WAS JUST LYING DOWN FOR A LITTLE BIT.
SO, WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?
LAST NIGHT.
THE BARREL-SHOP OWNER'S WIFE.

T/N: A famous buddhist temple.

SHE WAS ATTACKED BEHIND THE ZOJOJI* TEMPLE
WHILE SHE WAS WALKING ALONE.
.....
HOW MANY DOES THAT MAKE?
SIX.
SIX PEOPLE AND WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO DO ANYTHING.

I SEE...
BUT THIS TIME, SOMETHING IS DIFFERENT THAN BEFORE.
SOME-THING... DIFFER-ENT?
YES.
WHEN HER HIGHNESS ATTACKED THE LADY...

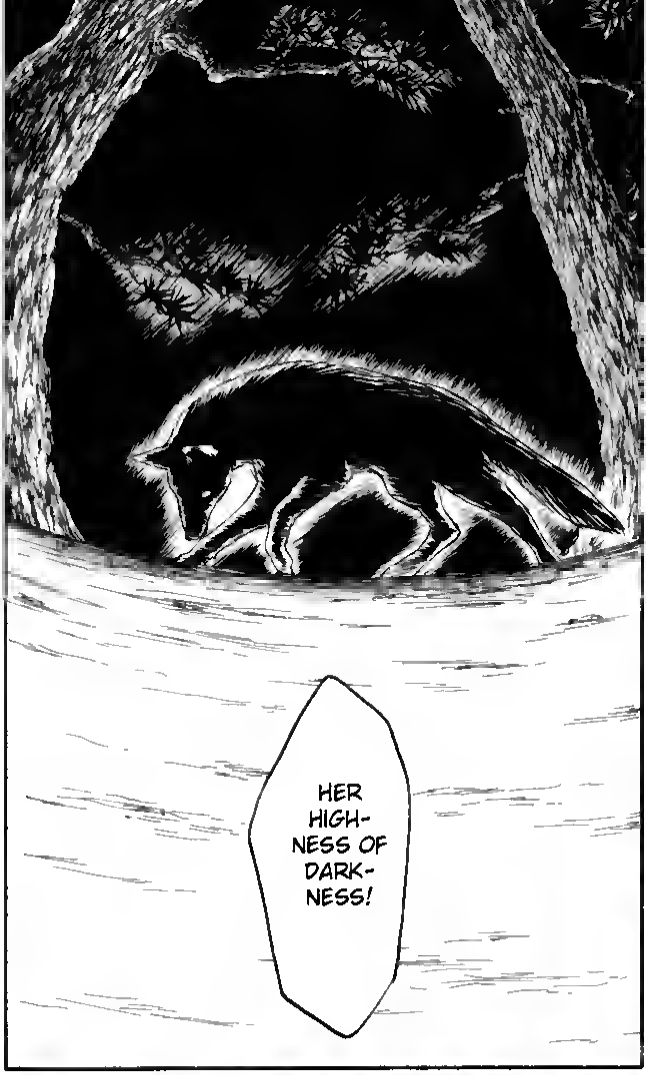
EH?
HUH?
DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING JUST NOW?

WHERE DID IT COME FROM!?
THE ZOJOJI!
!

IT SOUNDED LIKE A WOMAN'S SCREAM...
KYAAAAAA!

OVER THERE!
ARE YOU AL-
AH!
WHA!
WAHH!!

AH!
LOOK!
HOW HORRI-BLE...


HER HIGH-NESS OF DARK-NESS!

THE BLACK FOX!!
DON'T TELL ME THIS IS...

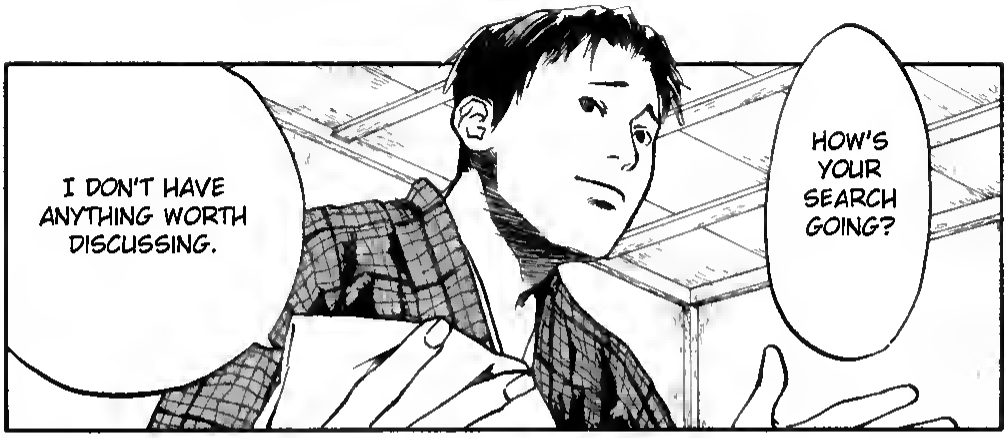
SO IT REALLY IS THAT WOMAN...
!!
RUN!

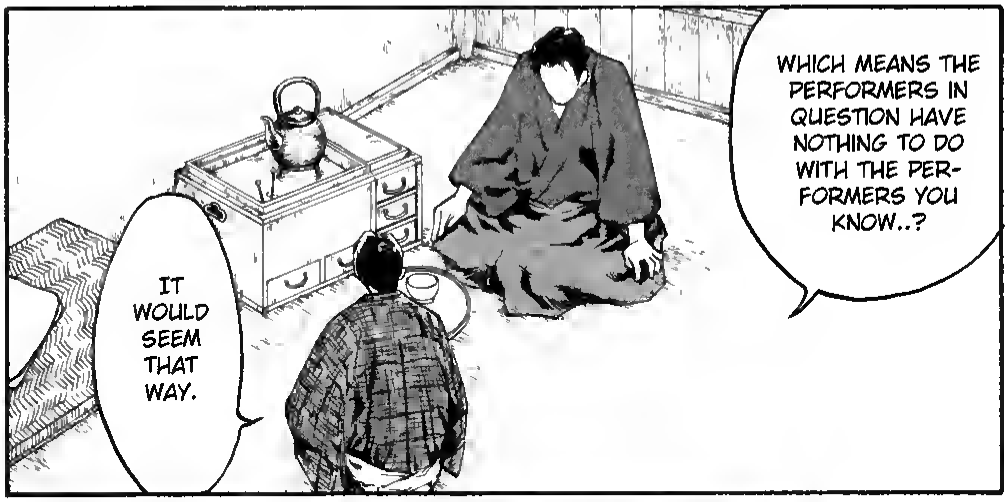
DID THEY CATCH IT?
NO.
THE ANIMAL EVENTUALLY ESCAPED, BUT...
STEP
STEP
WAIT!
LET'S GIVE CHASE!
DON'T LOSE IT!

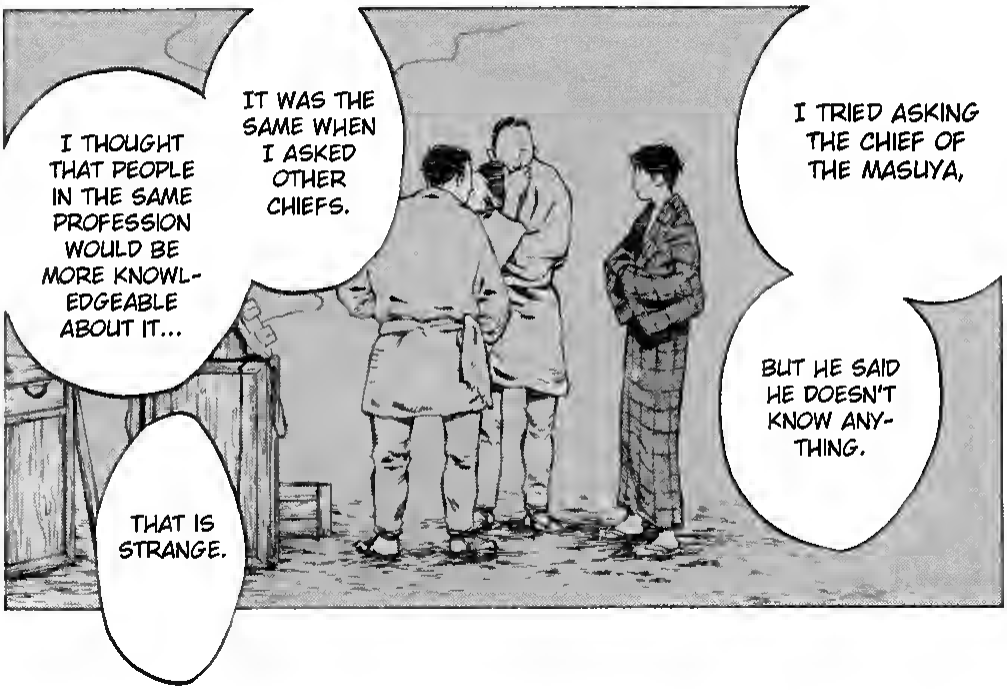
!!
HEL-

HELP ME!
A WOMAN...
A WOMAN WEARING A BRIDAL KIMONO...

IT WASN'T POSTED IN THE NEWS-PAPER.
FORTUNATELY, THAT MAN GOT AWAY WITH LIGHT INJURIES.
THEN...
YES.
THERE IS A WITNESS TO LAST NIGHT'S INCIDENT.
THIS IS A HUGE LEAD, RIGHT?
YOU'RE RIGHT.


I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING WORTH DISCUSSING.
HOW'S YOUR SEARCH GOING?


IT WOULD SEEM THAT WAY.
WHICH MEANS THE PERFORMERS IN QUESTION HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PERFORMERS YOU KNOW..?


I THOUGHT THAT PEOPLE IN THE SAME PROFESSION WOULD BE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT IT...
IT WAS THE SAME WHEN I ASKED OTHER CHIEFS.
I TRIED ASKING THE CHIEF OF THE MASUYA,
BUT HE SAID HE DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING.
THAT IS STRANGE.

YES.
IT'S ALMOST AS IF THEY'RE AVOIDING THEM.
THE PERPETRATORS ARE NOT PROPER PERFORMERS,
Strange & Fantastic News
THAT MUCH IS CERTAIN.

BUT THAT'S THE SAME AS KNOWING NOTHING AT ALL.
IN SHORT, ALL THE LEADS WE HAVE
CONSIST OF THE MAN FROM LAST NIGHT.
THAT'S HOW IT SEEMS.

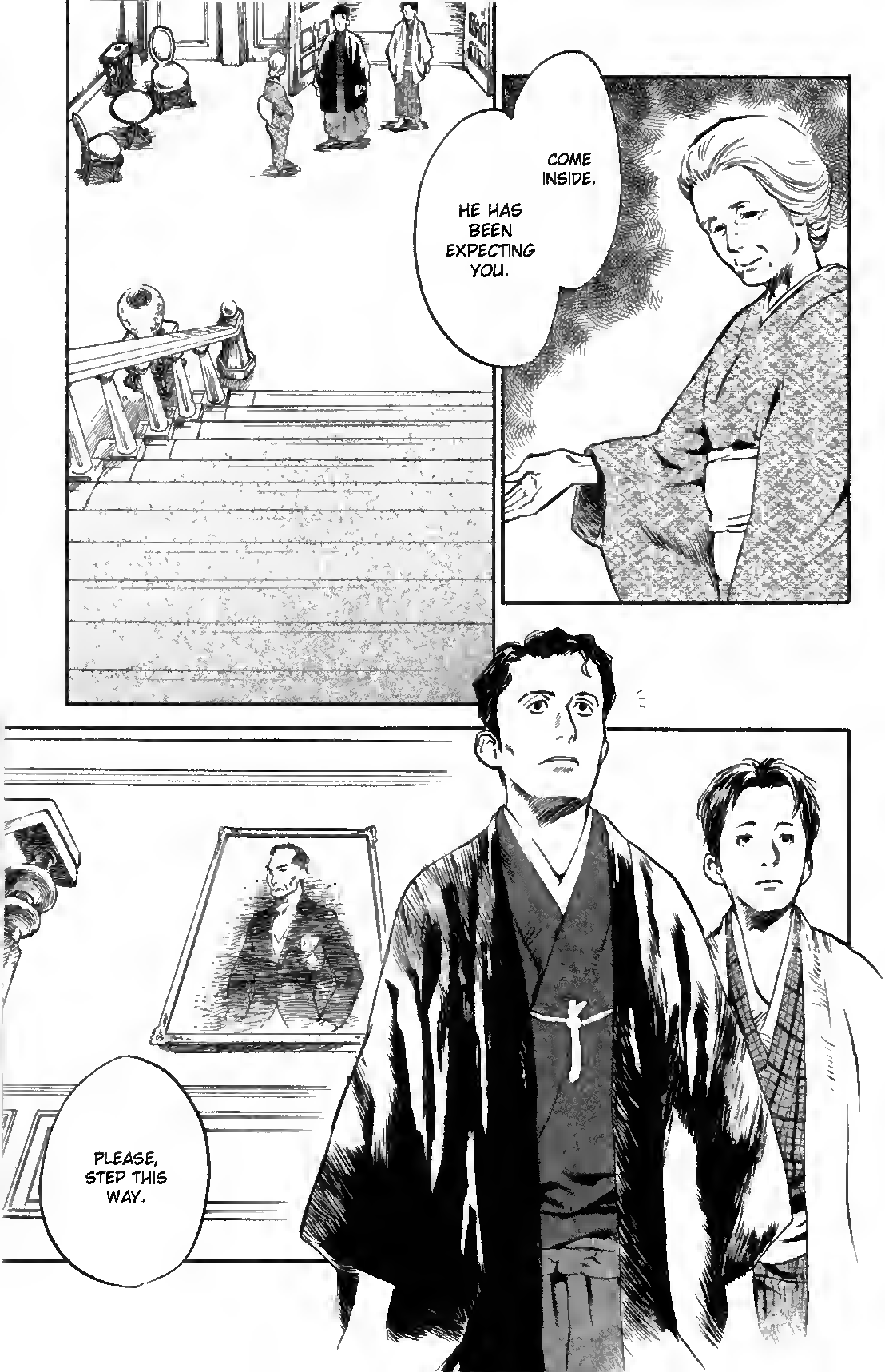
EH?
ACTUALLY, I WAS JUST ABOUT TO GO AND VISIT THIS MAN.
MANZOU-KUN, WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME WITH ME?

DO YOU HAVE AN APPOINT-MENT?
OF COURSE.
IF WE LISTEN TO THIS GUY'S STORY,
WE MIGHT FIND OUT SOMETHING.

First act. On the beauty of darkness (Part 2)

AGAIN...
ANOTHER GRAND MANSION...
AND LOOK AT HOW I'M DRESSED.
WHAT IF I OFFEND SOMEONE THERE?
Well~
HIS NAME IS TAKATSU-KASA.
IF HE HAS SUCH A SPLENDID MANSION,
IT MEANS HE IS A VERY EMINENT PERSON, DOESN'T IT?
.....
AS IN THE FORMER LINE OF REGENTS, TAKATSU-KASA?
THAT'S RIGHT.

Knock Knock
YOU MUST BE HIRAKAWA SHINTAROU FROM TEITO NIPPOU?
YES, I WOULD LIKE TO MEET YOUR MASTER.


COME INSIDE.
HE HAS BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
PLEASE, STEP THIS WAY.

YOUNG MASTER, TOKIWA.
HIRAKAWA-SAMA IS HERE TO SEE YOU.
THANK YOU.

I AM TAKATSU-KASA TSUNEHIRO.
YOU HAVE A SPLENDID MANSION.
THANK YOU.
BUT IT LOOKS A LITTLE DIFFERENT THAN A NORMAL WESTERN-STYLE MANSION, TAKATSUKASA-SAMA.
AH, PLEASE, NO NEED FOR SUCH FORMAL-ITIES.
AS YOU CAN SEE, I AM YOUR JUNIOR.
YOU ARE OLDER AND SHOULDN'T ADDRESS ME THAT WAY, HIRAKAWA-SAN.
YES... I MEAN NO, THAT IS...

PLEASE, DO NOT WORRY ABOUT IT.
IN THAT CASE, MAY I CALL YOU TAKATSU-KASA-SAN?
THAT'S FINE.
THE MAN IN THE PORTRAIT BY THE STAIRCASE LANDING.
TAKATSU-KASA HIROMICHI. FROM THE PREVIOUS GENERATION OF THE TAKATSU-KASA FAMILY.
YES.
AND ABOUT THIS BUILDING,
MY FATHER ERECTED IT.

THE TAKATSUKASA HOUSE USED TO BE ONE OF THE FIVE LINES OF REGENTS, TOGETHER WITH THE KONOE, KUJOU, ICHIJOU AND NIJOU HOUSES, BUT THEY FELL ON HARD TIMES FOR TOO LONG.
HOWEVER, HIROMICHI WAS A DIPLOMAT WHO OPERATED SEPARATELY BOTH FROM THE BAKUFU GOVERNMENT AND FROM THE NEW MEIJI GOVERNMENT*.
IN THE 17TH YEAR OF THE MEIJI ERA (1884), THE KAZOKU LAW WAS PROMULGATED AND HE WAS AWARDED THE TITLE OF DUKE. BY THAT TIME, HIROMICHI WAS AN ESTABLISHED DIPLOMAT WHO HAD MADE A FORTUNE.
NOT ONLY WAS HE PROFICIENT IN DIPLOMACY, BUT ALSO SKILLED IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, AND HE HAD MANY ACHIEVEMENTS.
HOWEVER, TEN YEARS AGO,
HE PASSED AWAY BEFORE SEEING THIS MANSION COMPLETED...

T/N: "Bakufu" refers to the shogunate, which was replaced by the Meiji Government, returning power to the Emperor and destroying the samurai system

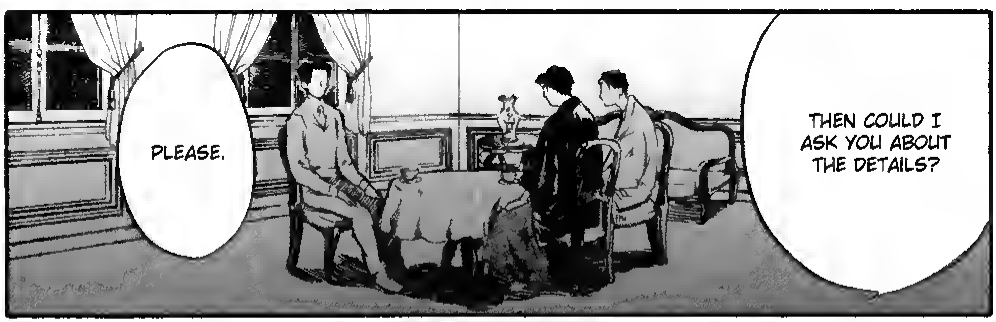
I SUPPOSE THIS IS WHY IT'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER MANSIONS.
AH, I SEE.
IT SEEMS LIKE HE ENTRUSTED A FOREIGN ARCHITECT WITH THE PLANNING.
AND FATHER DIRECTLY SUPERVISED THE INTERIOR DECORATIONS.
HE SAID THAT FOREIGN GUESTS WANT TO SEE JAPAN,
SO IT SHOULDN'T TRY TO IMITATE THE WESTERN WAY OF DECORATING.
BUT IT'S STILL A WESTERN MANSION.
HIS STUDY IS IN AN OUTHOUSE.
THE MANSION IS MEANT FOR ACCOMMODATING THE VISITERS...
THIS, TOO, IS JUST A REPITITION OF WHAT FATHER SAID.

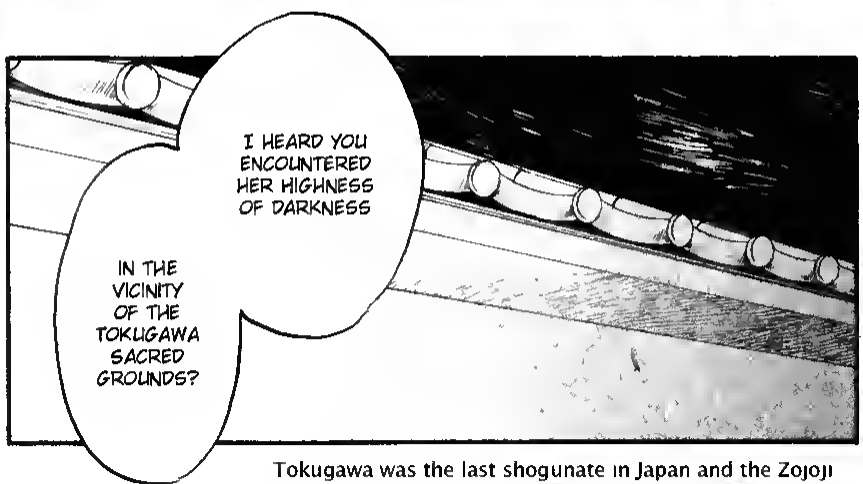
SO YOU RECEIVE A LOT OF FOREIGN VISITORS?
FROM TIME TO TIME, I HAVE VISITORS WHO COME HERE IN FATHER'S MEMORY.
BUT... I SUPPOSE IT'S LIKE CASTING PEARLS BEFORE SWINE FOR ME TO HAVE A PLACE LIKE THIS.

BY THE WAY, HIRAKAWA-SAN.
YES?
YOU TOLD THE SERVANT, THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK ABOUT LAST NIGHT'S INCIDENT.
AH!
WELL, YES, THAT'S RIGHT, THAT'S WHAT WE CAME HERE FOR.
I AM REASEARCHING HER HIGHNESS OF DARKNESS AND THE LIKE, BUT...

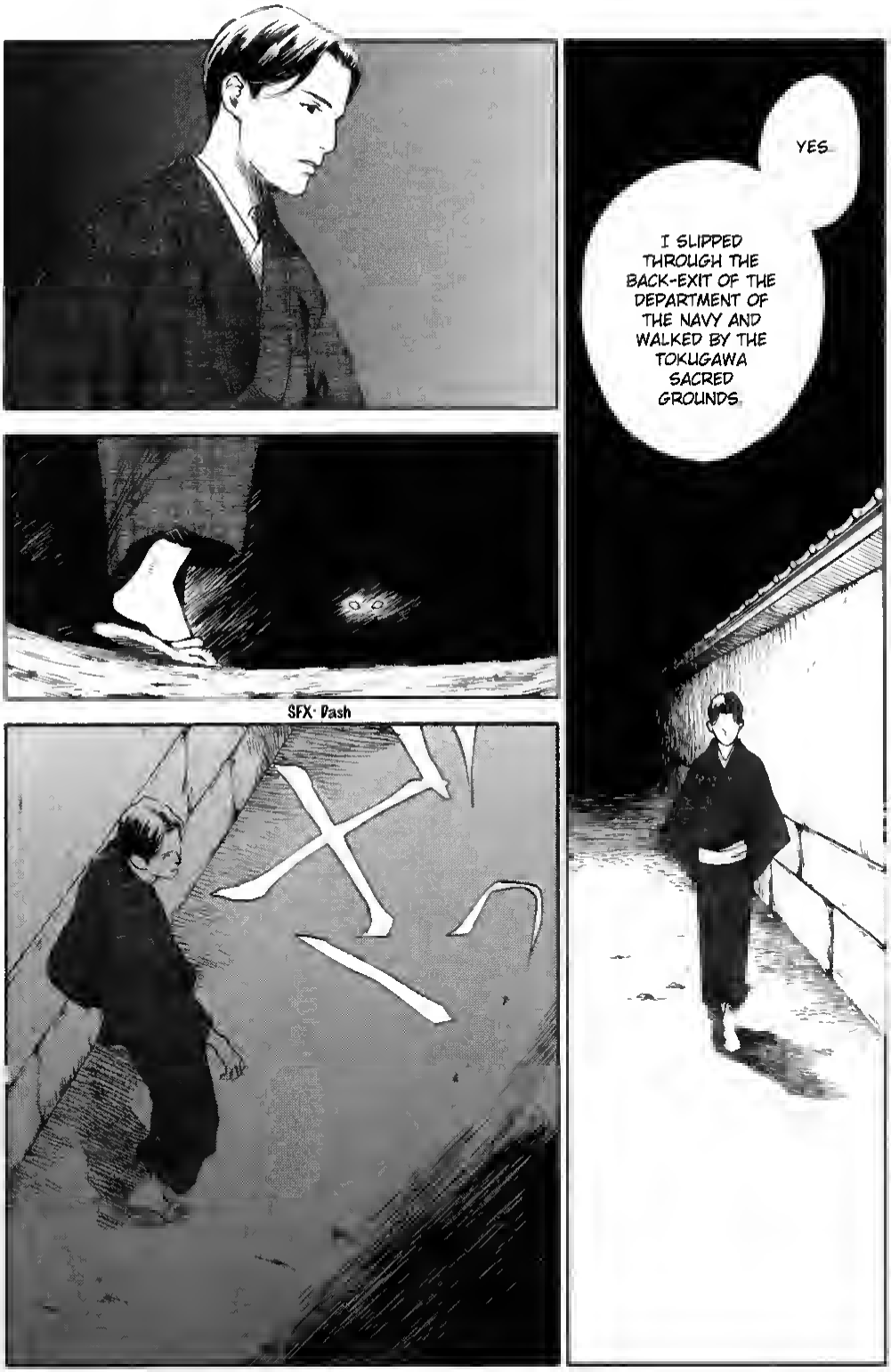
I HEARD THAT YOU WERE ATTACKED BY HER HIGHNESS OF DARKNESS,
TAKATSU-KASA-SAN.
IT WASN'T ANYTHING SO HORRIBLE...
I JUST ENCOUNTERED HER IN THE STREET.
SO IT IS TRUE THAT YOU HAPPENED TO MEET HER,
TAKATSU-KASA-SAN?
YES.
Well
YOU SEE, ALL THE OTHER WITNESSES WERE PEOPLE OF HIGH STANDING AND THEY WERE VERY EVASIVE.
I COULDN'T GET A CLEAR STATEMENT FROM THEM.
SO, I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A RUMOUR.

I SUPPOSE THEY WERE BEING MINDFUL OF MY LATE FATHER'S MEMORY, AND THAT'S WHY THEY DIDN'T SPEAK.
I WAS IN A HURRY TO GET HOME,
SO I JUST LEFT MY NAME, AND EXCUSED MYSELF.
I SEE. THAT MUST BE IT.





Tokugawa was the last shogunate in Japan and the Zojoji temple was the shoguns' family temple and burial ground.


YES.
I SLIPPED THROUGH THE BACK-EXIT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY AND WALKED BY THE TOKUGAWA SACRED GROUNDS.
SFX: Dash

I SEE...
I THINK IT WAS TOO BLACK TO BE A FOX.
BUT THAT MIGHT JUST BE ME, BECAUSE I LOVE DOGS AND EVEN OWN SOME AS PETS.
WAS IT A DOG?
IF IT WERE A FOX...
AND THEN?
I HEARD SOMEONE GIVE AN ANGRY SHOUT.
IT CAUGHT MY ATTENTION, AND WHEN I TURNED TO LOOK...

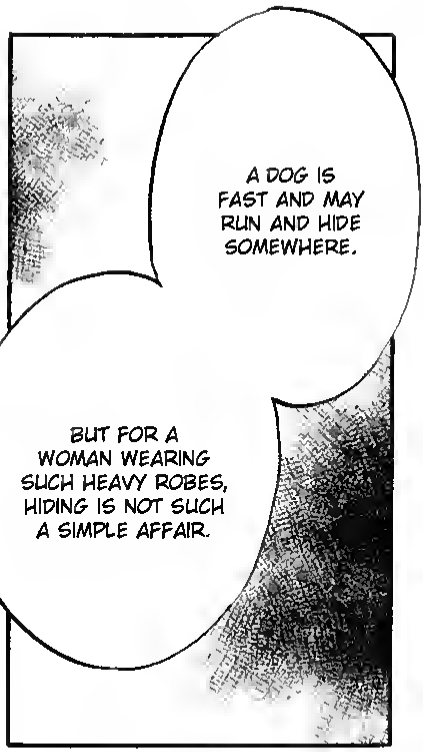
!
EVEN I DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW I MANAGED TO AVOID THAT.

AND THEN.
BUT YOU WERE WOUNDED NONETHELESS.
YES...
ALTHOUGH IT'S JUST A SMALL SCRATCH...
THE ANGRY VOICES HAD COME CLOSER,
SO I SOMEHOW REACHED THE CORNER AND CALLED FOR HELP.

A STRANGE WOMAN...
Run
THERE'S NO ONE HERE.
AND NO DOGS.
IMPOS-SIBLE...
THERE REALLY WAS A WOMAN IN A BRIDAL KIMONO...
THE DOG BRUSHED AGAINST ME BY THIS CORNER
AND WHEN I RECOVERED, THE WOMAN—
DID SHE LOOK LIKE AKAHIME?

T/N: In traditional kabuki theatre, the part of a young, naive and very much in love, young lady, usually dressed in bright red.

YES.
I THINK THE KIMONO WAS RED...
ALL RIGHT.
LET'S SEARCH THE AREA SOME MORE.

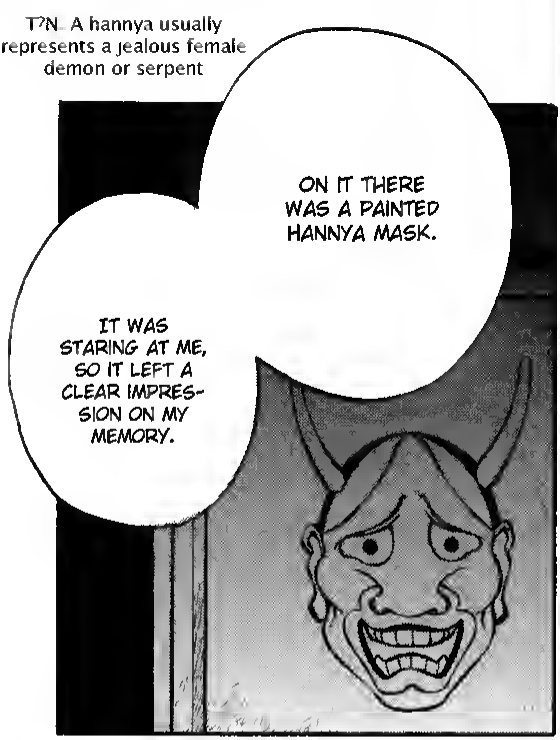

A DOG IS FAST AND MAY RUN AND HIDE SOMEWHERE.
BUT FOR A WOMAN WEARING SUCH HEAVY ROBES, HIDING IS NOT SUCH A SIMPLE AFFAIR.

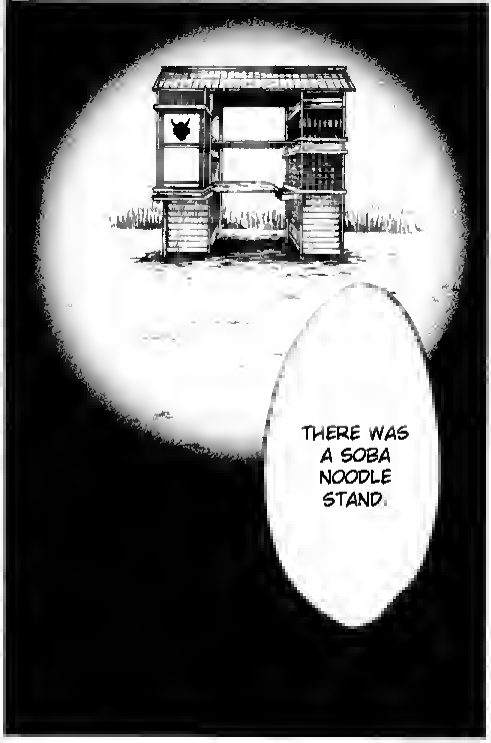
BUT BOTH THE WOMAN AND THE DOG WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN...

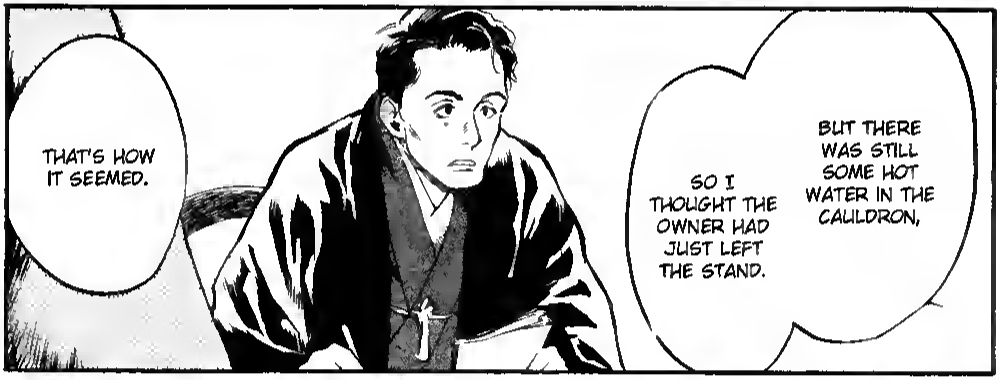
THAT ROAD LEADS STRAIGHT TO TENKOU-TEMPLE. THERE ARE NO SIDE ROADS TO DUCK INTO.
BESIDES, IT ONLY TOOK YOU A MOMENT TO RE-COVER.

HMM.
DIDN'T YOU NOTICE ANYTHING ELSE?
EVEN IF SHE HAD HIDDEN IN SOME CREVICE,
THE TIP OF HER HAIRDO OR HER KIMONO SLEEVE, OR SOMETHING SIMILAR SHOULD HAVE BEEN VISIBLE.
SO IT WOULD SEEM...
THERE WERE TRACES OF BLOOD,
PERHAPS DRIPPING FROM HER CLAWS.
BUT THE TRAIL SUDDENLY STOPPED.
THEY DISAPPEARED?
EVERYONE SAID IT WAS VERY MYSTERIOUS.
AH, THERE IS ONE OTHER THING.

T?N: A hannya usually represents a jealous female demon or serpent







HMPH
YES, YOU MUST BE RIGHT.
IT HAPPENED IN A SPLIT SECOND, I WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE.
I'M AFRAID NOT...
ALL I HAD TO SEE BY WAS MOONLIGHT.
WERE YOU ALONE?
I'M SORRY, BUT
BUT THAT AREA IS VERY DESOLATE AT NIGHT.
FORGIVE MY RUDE-NESS,
YES.
I WAS ALONE.

WASN'T IT SOMEWHAT CARELESS TO WALK THROUGH THERE?
JUST A BIT FURTHER TO THE EAST, THERE IS A BUSTLING STREET.
.....
I HAD SOME PRIVATE BUSINESS IN ATAGO-CHOU.
I HAD GONE IN THE VICINITY OF THE MITA ENGLISH SCHOOL AND WAS ON MY WAY BACK.
THAT IS...
I DIDN'T WANT TO BE AROUND OTHERS AT THE TIME,
I DIDN'T WANT TO MEET ANYONE I KNEW, SO I CHOSE THE STREET NEXT TO THE TEMPLE.
AH...

SO YOU HAVE A SPECIAL SOMEONE?
EHM... PLEASE, HIRAKAWA-SAN, LET THIS REMAIN
A SECRET BETWEEN US.
HE WASN'T DIFFICULT AT ALL.
YES, HE DIDN'T PUT ON ANY AIRS.

AH, BUT...
THAT SOBA NOODLE STAND WITH THE HANNYA MASK.
I'VE HEARD RUMOURS ABOUT IT.
BUT UNFORTUNATELY, WE DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING USEFUL FROM HIM.
SO IT WOULD SEEM.
ANOTHER OUTRAGEOUS STORY.
I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS THE SAME STAND,
BUT I DOUBT THERE ARE MANY LIKE THAT.
WHAT RUMOURS?
THAT THE OWNER PUTS ON THE MASK AND DEMANDS YOU PAY WITH THE THING THAT IS DEAREST TO YOU.
ASIDE FROM YOUR OWN LIFE.

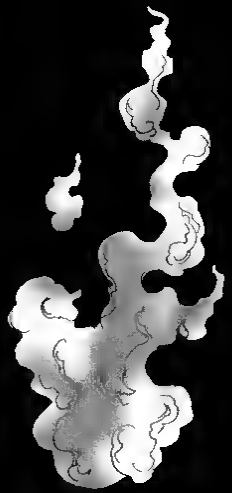
EVEN SO, I WANT TO HEAR EVERYTHING IN CASE THERE IS SOMETHING TO IT.
I SEE.
THEN I WILL BRIEF YOU AS WE WALK BACK.
BY THE WAY, MANZOU-KUN.
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER STREET PER-FORMERS?
EVERYTHING IS JUST RUMOURS. THERE'S NOTHING SOLID TO LEARN.
MANZOU-KUN.
WHERE DID HER HIGHNESS OF DARKNESS DISAPPEAR TO?
WHAT IS IT HIRAKAWA-SAN?

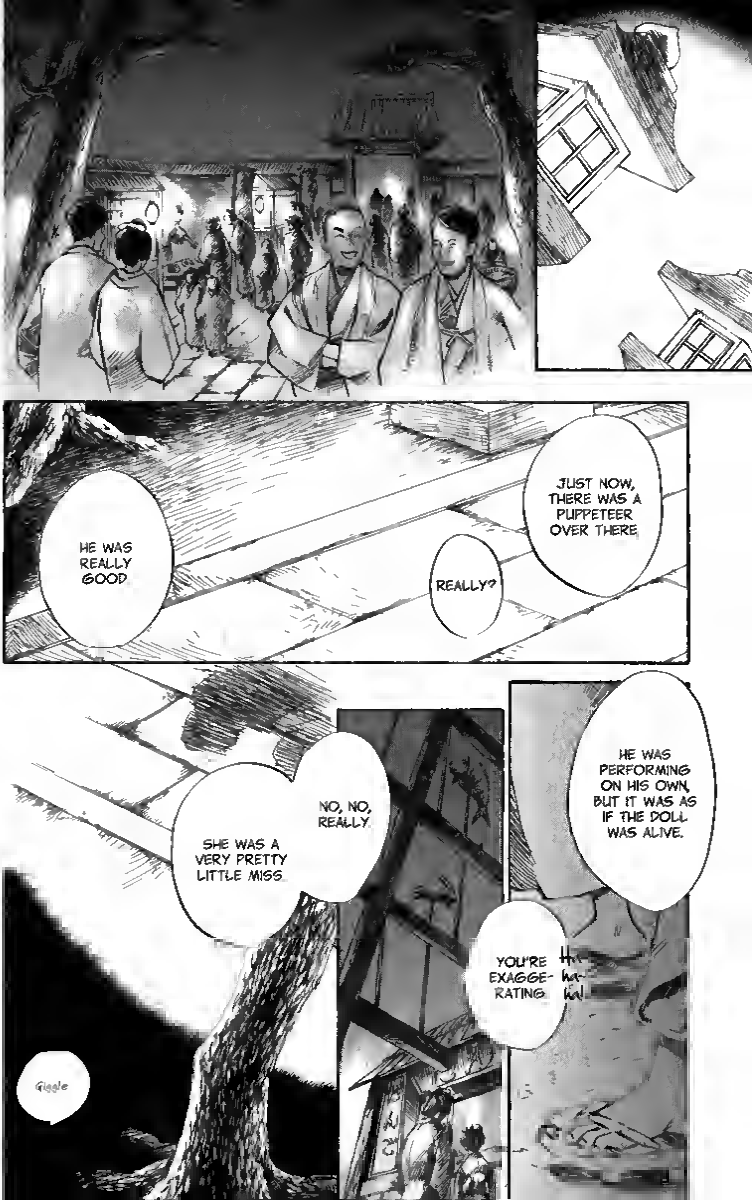
OF COURSE, SHE MELTED INTO THE DARKNESS AND ESCAPED.
IF BY ANY CHANCE...
SHE REALLY DISAPPEARED...
THEN IT'S POSSIBLE SHE'S SOME TYPE OF MONSTER OR TRANSFORMER.
ABSURD.
DO YOU BELIEVE IN SUCH THINGS, HIRAKAWA-SAN?
NO, IT'S NOT THAT I BELIEVE IN THEM, BUT...
BOTH HER HIGHNESS OF DARKNESS AND THE FLAMING DEMON ARE SOMETHING ANY HUMAN CAN DO
AS LONG AS THEY HAVE THE CLAW BLADES AND FIRE.
THERE IS NO ONE WHO CAN TESTIFY THAT THE SOULS OF THE HUMAN SOUL SELLER AND THE FLYING HEADS, WERE GENUINE.
FURTERMORE, THE SWORDSMAN WAS USING A SWORD OF A VERY BRIGHT METAL.

T/N
Bright metals were considered capable of repelling evil and thus unusable in the hands of something truly evil.

THE STORY BECOMES MUCH STRANGER IF THERE REALLY IS ANYTHING SUPERNATURAL IN IT.
HMM.
THEN YOU THINK ALL OF THEM ARE GROTESQUE, BUT HUMAN?
YES.
BUT WHAT IS IT ALL FOR?
WHO KNOWS?
WHATEVER IT MAY BE, I JUST WISH THIS WOULD ALL END.
RIGHT.

Second Act. On the other hand, what is the flower of the night? (Part 1)



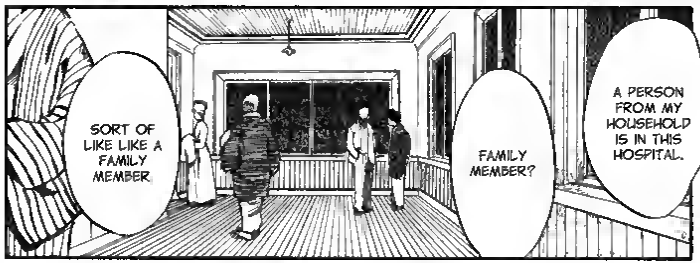

JUST NOW, THERE WAS A PUPPETEER OVER THERE
REALLY?
HE WAS REALLY GOOD
HE WAS PERFORMING ON HIS OWN, BUT IT WAS AS IF THE DOLL WAS ALIVE.
YOU'RE EXAGGERATING
Hm-hm-hm
NO, NO, REALLY
SHE WAS A VERY PRETTY LITTLE MISS
Giggle

Think better of me, then
You are
Tonight was a really good performance
Ah, I have been called pretty.
Let us decide on one human life
HE-HE-HEH.
Ah, my.
How cold of you.
Within you, is there no place...

THUD
for anybody but the creatures of darkness?
Someone fell!
!
Look at that!
Isn't that the Flaming Demon?!
HEY!
THIS MAN IS STILL BREATHING!
WE MUST TELL EVERYONE AT THE SHOP... AT IZAWA-YA.

That's right...
I TOLD YOU, YOU CANNOT SEE HIM.
BUT, PLEASE!
Clinic
JUST FOR A MINUTE!
WE JUST WANT TO ASK HIM A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS FLAMING DEMON OR WHATEVER IT WAS.
I TOLD YOU.
PLEASE, LEAVE.
NO, JUST LISTEN—
AH.

From yesterday?
H-HAS YOUR CONDITION CHANGED FOR THE WORSE—
NO
TAKATSUKASA-SAN.
WHAT A COINCIDENCE.
HIRAKAWA-SAN, MANZOU-SAN.


SORT OF LIKE LIKE A FAMILY MEMBER.
FAMILY MEMBER?
A PERSON FROM MY HOUSEHOLD IS IN THIS HOSPITAL.

SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN WORKING AT THE HOUSE FOR A VERY LONG TIME.

I CAME RUNNING WHEN I HEARD THAT THE PERSON ATTACKED BY THE FLAMING DEMON WAS BROUGHT HERE.
BUT, I WAS TOLD AN INTERVIEW IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THE TIME.
AND YOU, HIRAKAWA-SAN? IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG?
NO
I'M GATHERING SOME INFORMATION.
IS THAT SO?
HOW IS THEIR CONDITION?
FORTUNATELY, SEEMS LIKE IT'S NOT AS SERIOUS AS WE THOUGHT.
IS THIS WHY YOU WERE QUARRELLING WITH THE NURSE?
YES, WELL...
WHAT?!
HE IS THE PERSON FROM MY HOUSEHOLD.
WAIT A MINUTE.
DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS, TAKATSUKASA-SAN??

EH?!
SAKICHI... THE MAN WHO WAS INJURED WENT TO IZAWA-YA, IN GINZA,
TO ACCOMPANY KIKUE-SAN IN MY PLACE BECAUSE I HAD UNEXPECTED VISITORS AT HOME.
THIS LADY'S NAME IS ARITA KIKUE-SAN.
IS THAT SO..?
THAT I ASKED THE HOSPITAL STAFF FOR ALL VISITORS TO BE TURNED DOWN.
THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE COMING TO GATHER INFORMATION OR SIMPLY TO VISIT
TAKATSU-KASA-SAN
....

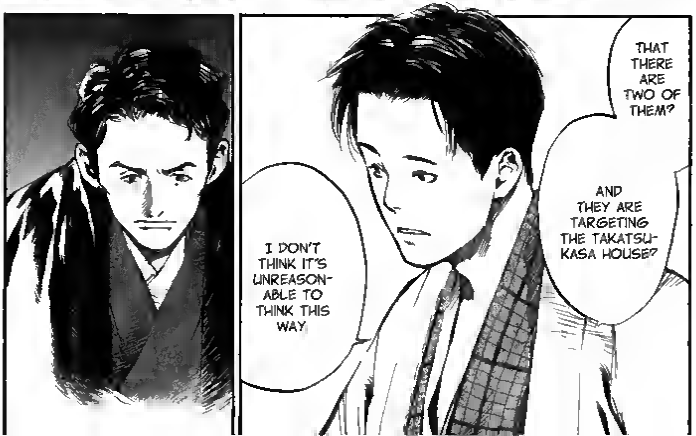
BUT IF HE SEEMS TO BE IN PAIN, I WILL HAVE TO ASK YOU TO LEAVE HIM ALONE FOR THE DAY.
YES, OF COURSE! THAT GOES WITHOUT QUESTION!
WE HAVE MET BEFORE, SO I WILL MAKE AN EXCEPTION FOR YOU, HIRAKAWA-SAN AND MANZOU-SAN
I UNDER-STAND...
I UNDERSTAND YOUR CIRCUM-STANCES, BUT ISN'T THERE A WAY AROUND THIS...
Could you please
I WAS THINKING, HOW OMINOUS..
WHAT IS IT, MANZOU-KUN?

IS THIS REALLY A COINCI-DENCE?
TAKATSU-KASA-SAN WAS RECENTLY ATTACKED
AND NOW HIS SERVANT
OMI-NOUS...?
AND ANOTHER THING
THIS SAKICHI-SAN WAS ACCOMPANYING TAKATSUKASA-SAN'S LADY TO THE IZAWA-YA.
WOULDN'T IT SEEM, TO BYSTANDERS, THAT HE WAS ACTUALLY TAKATSUKASA-SAN?
WHAT IF...

LAST TIME WHEN TAKATSUKASA-SAN WAS INJURED, HE WAS ON HIS WAY HOME FROM ARITA-SAN'S PLACE
HE SAID THE DOG RUSHED BY HIM AND WHEN HE RECOVERED AND TURNED, THERE WAS YAMIGOZEN.
THERE'S NO PROBLEM WITH THIS IF THE DOG TRANSFORMED INTO YAMIGOZEN, BUT
IF THE DOG AND SHE ARE DIFFERENT BEINGS,
YAMIGOZEN MUST HAVE BEEN TAILING TAKATSUKASA-SAN
ISN'T THAT JUST OVER-ANALYZING?
TAKATSUKASA-SAN WAS ATTACKED BY YAMIGOZEN THIS TIME IT WAS THE FLAMING DEMON.
THE ATTACKERS ARE DIFFERENT.
AND IT'S NOT AS IF ALL THE VICTIMS WERE RELATED TO THE TAKATSUKASA HOUSE.

I LOOKED AT YOUR NOTES ON THIS CASE, HIRAKAWA-SAN
SO FAR, YAMIGOZEN HAS ATTACKED SEVEN PEOPLE, THE FLAMING DEMON - FOUR PEOPLE, AND THE SWORDSMAN - FOUR PEOPLE THAT MAKES FIFTEEN PEOPLE

MANZOU-KUN, DON'T TELL ME YOU MEAN..
BUT DON'T YOU THINK THAT IN THIS HUGE IMPERIAL CAPITAL, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR TWO PEOPLE OUT OF ONLY FIFTEEN TO HAVE A CLOSE MASTER-SERVANT CONNECTION?


I DON'T THINK IT'S UNREASON-ABLE TO THINK THIS WAY.
AND THEY ARE TARGETING THE TAKATSU-KASA HOUSE?
THAT THERE ARE TWO OF THEM?

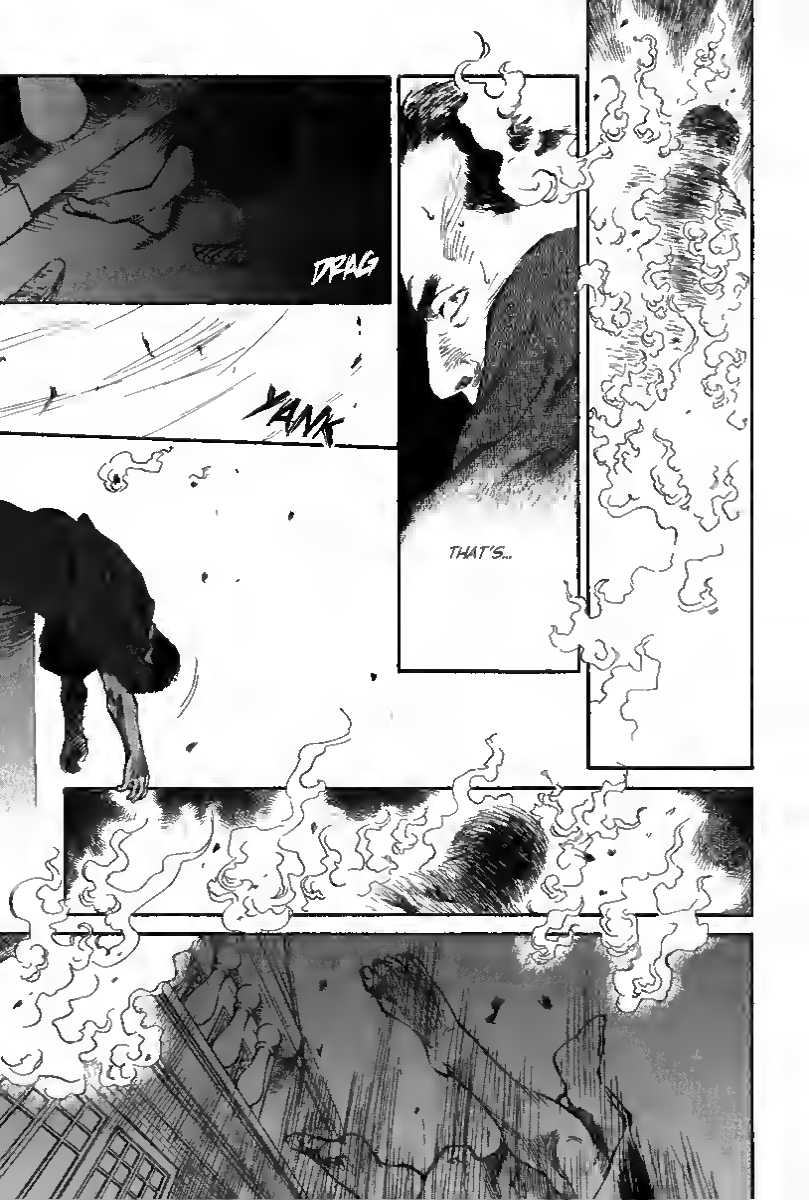
THIS WAY, PLEASE
TOKIWA-SAMA, HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN SOMETHI—
THIS IS HIRAKAWA-SAN. HE IS A REPORTER FROM TEITO NIPPOU
AH, PLEASE, JUST REST.

BUT YOU MUST NOT FORCE YOURSELF BY ANY MEANS
YES..
IF YOU FEEL UP TO IT, COULD YOU PLEASE TALK TO HIM FOR A WHILE?

I WAS OUT ON THE IZAWA-YA'S BALCONY

creak
CLACK
?

UGH..!
...?!
SFX: THUD


DRAG
YANK
THAT'S...

SO YOU WEREN'T PUSHED
BUT DRAGGED AND THROWN OVER THE BALCONY?

S-SO, DID YOU SEE WHAT THE FLAMING DEMON LOOK LIKE?
NO
MY VISION WAS BLURRED BECAUSE OF THE PAIN. I COULDN'T SEE.
THAT RAILING IS TOO HIGH FOR ME
I CAN'T FALL OVER IT JUST BY BEING PUSHED IN THE BACK
HOW-EVER..
I GOT THE VAGUE IMPRESSION IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THAT NEWS-SELLER...
NEWS-SELLER?
REALLY...
I SAW A HUMAN SILHOUITTE ENGULFED IN FLAMES, BUT ONLY FOR A MOMENT.
IZAWA-YA IS A SHOP FOR IMPORTED WESTERN GOODS
AND THERE WAS A NEWS-SELLER?
YES
I THOUGHT IT WAS STRANGE, TOO.. BUT THAT'S ALL

SAKICHI-SAN,
DID YOU EVER TRY TALKING TO HIM?
NEWS-SELLER...
NO
I JUST SAW HIM CLIMBING UP THE STAIRS
AND I THINK THERE WAS SOMETHING WRITTEN ON THE BACK.
HE LOOKED
JUST LIKE ANY NORMAL NEWS-SELLER
BUT, HE HAD A HUGE WOODEN BOX STRAPPED TO HIS BACK I THINK THAT'S THE ONLY STRANGE THING ABOUT HIM.
MANZOU-KUN.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE THE NEWS-SELLER THE STAFF TOLD ME ABOUT.

BY THE WAY, WHY WERE YOU ALONE ON THE BALCONY, SAKICHI-SAN?
WEREN'T YOU WITH ARITA-SAN..?
ABOUT THAT..
AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH OF AN ESCORT I MAY BE TO THE LADY, I WAS EMBARRASSED TO ACCOMPANY HER WHILE SHE BOUGHT FACE-POWDER AND SO ON.
THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY UPROAR IN THAT SHOP..
THAT'S WHY I WENT OUT ON THE BALCONY
AND THERE WAS NOBODY ELSE ON THE BALCONY?
ARE YOU CERTAIN OF THAT?
YES
NOBODY...
I SEE.

ARITA-SAN, COULD I PLEASE ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS, TOO?
AH
THERE WAS SOME BULKY LUGGAGE UNDER A SHEET IN THE CORNER.
AT FIRST I TOOK IT FOR A PERSON, BUT I WAS WRONG
VERY GOOD
HM..
NO
DID YOU SEE THE FLAMING DEMON, ARITA-SAN?
I FINISHED MY SHOPPING AND WENT OUT ON THE BALCONY.
SAKICHI WASN'T THERE. I WAS CERTAIN THAT HE HAD GONE HOME AHEAD OF ME..
YES
I NOTICED THAT THERE WAS SOME UPROAR, BUT NOT ITS REASON.
I WAS IN THE SHOP
THEN, YOU ALSO DID NOT KNOW THAT SAKICHI-SAN HAD FALLEN?

I HEARD THE TRUTH LATER AND WAS VERY SURPRISED
I SEE...
AND DID YOU SEE THE NEWS-SELLER?
I DID.
HE PASSED BY ME ON THE THIRD FLOOR
ON HIS WAY TO THE BALCONY?
COULD BE.
I DON'T KNOW
IS THAT SO...?
OF COURSE, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT NOTHING FATAL HAPPENED TO SAKICHI-SAN
I DO NOT THINK THAT THE PERSON WHO DIED IN SAKICHI'S PLACE WOULD AGREE
SQUEEZE

WHAT BAD LUCK IT IS TO WALK DOWN A STREET, NOT KNOWING THAT A PERSON IS ABOUT TO FALL ON YOU FROM ABOVE.
DON'T YOU THINK SO?
IT—
IT'S NOT AS IF SAKICHI-SAN FELL BECAUSE HE WANTED TO
HIS LIFE TOO WAS IN DANGER...
YES
THAT'S WHY IT WAS SUCH GOOD LUCK FOR SAKICHI
WHAT THE..?
WHAT I HAVE TO SAY NEXT
MAY BE TOO FAR-FETCHED, BUT..

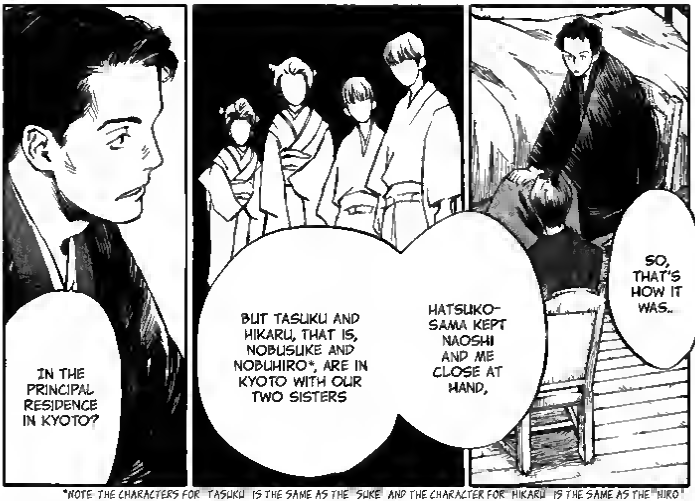
ME...?
I WAS JUST TALKING TO MANZOU-KUN AND..
THERE IS A CHANCE, HOWEVER SLIGHT,
THAT SOMEONE IS TARGETING TAKATSUKASA-SAN.
...IT MAY NOT BE TRUE, BUT...
WHAT AN INTERESTING STORY, HIRA-KAWA-SAN.
I DON'T HAVE PROOF, BUT I'M SERIOUS.
WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT?
IT SEEMS THAT NAOSHI-SAN HAS SHOWN HIS TRUE COLORS
KIKUE-SAN,
DON'T SAY SUCH RECK-LESS THINGS, PLEASE

EXCUSE ME,
BUT, WHO IS NAOSHI-SAN?
MY OLDER BROTHER..
Eh?!

Second Act
On the other hand, what is the flower of the night? (Part 2)

YOU...
YOU HAVE AN OLDER BROTHER?!
YES...

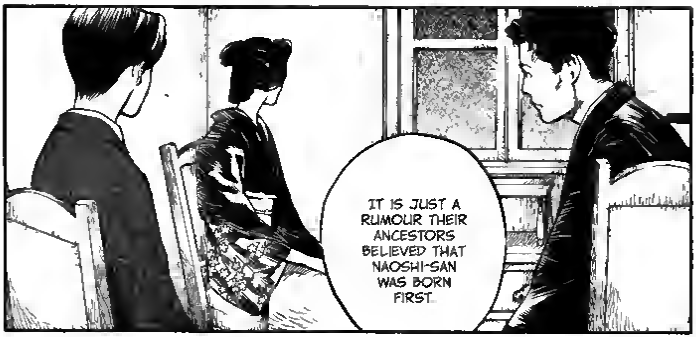
WE ARE THE SAME AGE... OF COURSE, OUR MOTHERS ARE DIFFERENT.
IS HE AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD?
FATHER... DID NOT HAVE ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN.
FATHER HIROMICHI HAD SIX CHILDREN, MYSELF INCLUDED
FOUR OF THEM ARE BOYS AND NONE ARE ILLEGITIMATE.
HATSUKO-SAMA...
THAT IS, MY MOTHER DID NOT HAVE ANY CHILDREN.
BUT THERE WERE THREE CONCUBINES
ONE GAVE BIRTH TO ME, ANOTHER TO NAOSHI, AND YET ANOTHER TO TASUKU AND HIKARU.

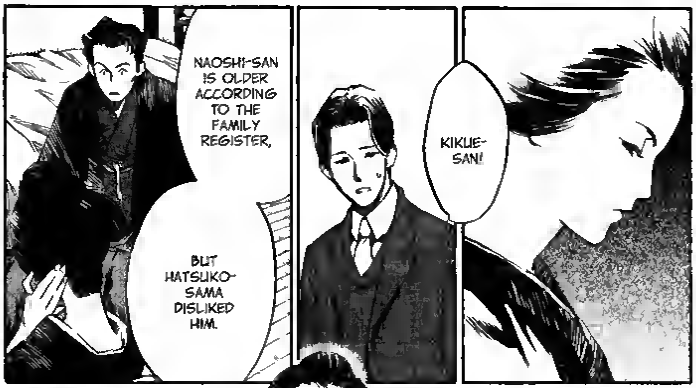

SO, THAT'S HOW IT WAS..
HATSUKO-SAMA KEPT NAOSHI AND ME CLOSE AT HAND,
BUT TASUKU AND HIKARU, THAT IS, NOBUSUKE AND NOBUHIRO*, ARE IN KYOTO WITH OUR TWO SISTERS
IN THE PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE IN KYOTO?

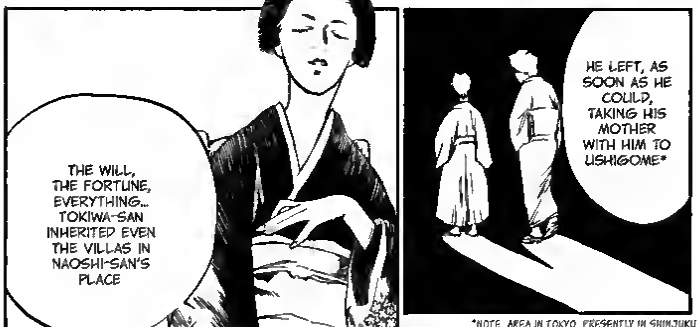
*NOTE: THE CHARACTERS FOR "TASUKU" IS THE SAME AS THE "SUKE" AND THE CHARACTER FOR "HIKARU" IS THE SAME AS THE "HIRO."

NO
THEY HAD A HOUSE IN HIGASHIYAMA BOUGHT ESPECIALLY FOR THEM.
AND AS FOR THE PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE...
FATHER CHANGED HIS RESIDENCE TO A VILLA IN YOKOHAMA
AND MEANT TO MOVE PERMANENTLY TO THE MANSION AT AZABU WHEN IT WAS COMPLETED SO...
HATSUKO-SAMA, TOO, WAS WORKING IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

YES
HATSUKO-SAMA DIED LAST YEAR AND BEQUEATHED IT TO ME
SO I SUPPOSE THIS MAKES THEIR HOUSE JUST A VILLA.
I SEE
THEN THE MANSION IN AZABU IS THE PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE.
BUT, THE TAKATSUKASA HOUSE SHOULD BELONG TO MY ELDER BROTHER,
BECAUSE I'M ONLY A SECOND SON...
YOU SAID... YOU WERE THE SAME AGE?
YES
WE WERE BORN ON THE SAME DAY IN THE SAME YEAR.






THE WILL, THE FORTUNE, EVERYTHING... TOKIWA-SAN INHERITED EVEN THE VILLAS IN NAOSHI-SAN'S PLACE
HE LEFT, AS SOON AS HE COULD, TAKING HIS MOTHER WITH HIM TO USHIGOME*

*NOTE. AREA IN TOKYO PRESENTLY IN SHINJUKU

KIKUE-SAN!
AM I NOT TELLING THE TRUTH?
NOTHING BELONGS TO NAOSHI-SAN.
HE RECEIVES AN ALLOWANCE,
BUT NOBODY WHO HAD THE PROSPECTS OF BECOMING A DUKE COULD BE HAPPY WITH JUST THAT
AND ON TOP OF THAT, NAOSHI-SAN IS A VAGABOND.
HE DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL AND WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT HE IS DOING NOW

ACTUALLY, HATSUKO-SAMA WAS GOING TO DISINHERIT NAOSHI-SAN.
PLEASE, STOP, KIKUE-SAN.
THAT'S WHY I'M ALWAYS TELLING YOU TO WATCH OUT
ASK YOUR HEART WHO WOULD BE THE ONLY ONE LAUGHING IF ANYTHING WERE TO HAPPEN TO YOU.
WE CAN'T EVEN BE SURE
IF HATSUKO-SAMA'S DEATH WAS REALLY AN ACCIDENT...

EH.M...
THERE SHOULDN T BE SO MANY VISITORS UNTIL SO LATE AT NIGHT...

SEE YOU AGAIN, SAKICHI
YES.. OF COURSE

COULD YOU SEE ME OFF HOME?
TOKIWA-SAN, LET US GO

COULD YOU PLEASE LET SAKICHI-SAN REST FOR NOW?

TAKE CARE OF YOUR-SELF

EHM.. I'M SORRY
HIRAKAWA-SAN
I'M SORRY IF THIS LEFT A BAD TASTE IN YOUR MOUTH.
I WILL MAKE SURE TO COMPENSATE..
EH, NO, DON'T LET IT BOTHER YOU..
CLOSE

SAKICHI-SAN,
I'M SORRY FOR DISTURBING YOU..
PLEASE, TAKE CARE.
THANK YOU FOR COMING.
"IF HATSUKO-SAMA'S DEATH WAS AN ACCIDENT_"
HIRAKAWA-SAN,
WE SHOULD EXCUSE OURSELVES NOW, TOO
HM? AH, YES

MANZOU-SAN
YES?
YOU ASKED WHY I WAS ON THAT BALCONY, RIGHT?
THE TRUTH IS THAT
I WAS TALKING TO KIKUE-SAN ON THAT BALCONY.

I WAS ASKING HER
TO BREAK UP WITH TOKIWA-SAN.
IN THE END, WE COULDN'T REACH AN AGREEMENT AND SHE WENT IN THE SHOP
WHY WOULD YOU TALK TO HER ABOUT THAT?
NEITHER NAOSHI-SAN NOR TOKIWA-SAN HAS INHERITED THE HOUSE PROPERLY, YET.
JUST BEFORE SHE DIED, HATSUKO-SAMA HAD STARTED PROCEDURES TO DISINHERIT NAOSHI-SAN
THIS CAUSED A GREAT UPROAR ON THE GATHERING OF THE WHOLE FAMILY

THEY CAME TO ASK IF TOKIWA-SAMA WILL STOP THE PROCEDURES HATSUKO-SAMA HAD STARTED
ACTUALLY, THE UNEXPECTED VISITORS THE MASTER MENTIONED WERE RELATIVES
ACCORDING TO THE REGISTRY, NAOSHI-SAMA IS THE NEXT IN LINE.
THERE WERE MANY WHO ASKED HOW, THEN, IS IT POSSIBLE TO DISINHERIT HIM?
I SEE.
BUT OF COURSE, KIKUE'S EXISTENCE IS A THREAT TO THEM.
I'VE BEEN TELLING THIS TO TOKIWA-SAMA OVER AND OVER AGAIN,
BUT HE KEEPS SAYING HE DOESN'T CARE WHO INHERITS.

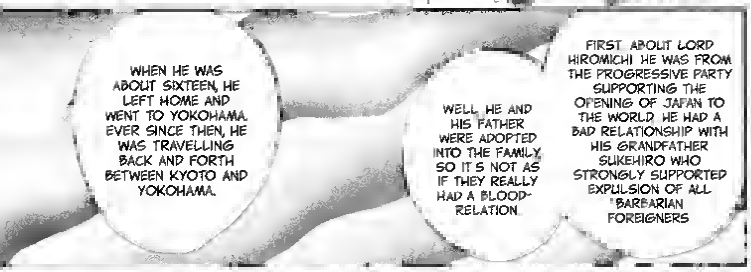
I KEEP TELLING HIM THAT IF THE INHERITANCE MOVED TO NAOSHI-SAMA, A WOMAN LIKE KIKUE WILL BREAK UP WITH HIM.
BUT HE DOESN'T LISTEN.
TAKATSU-KASA-SAN IS STILL YOUNG.
THAT IS THE ONLY THING HE WILL NOT TAKE ADVICE ON.
YOU ARE ABSO-LUTELY RIGHT
I SUP-POSE YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT EVEN IF YOU KNOW.
I'M SORRY FOR KEEPING YOU
NO, NO.
I KNOW THIS IS VERY RUDE OF ME, BUT...
WHAT KIND OF WOMAN IS KIKUE-SAN?
...

I KNEW IT, SHE'S FROM THE RED-LIGHTS DISTRICT.
DO NOT TRUST ANYTHING KIKUE SAYS
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT KIKUE, TRY ASKING ABOUT A WOMAN NAMED KIKUYA FROM YANAGIBASHI*.
*NOTE THE "WILLOW BRIDGE," TOKYO
THAT IS NOT WHAT I MEAN.
BUT THE BALCONY WAS DARK, RIGHT?
AND IT'S NOT TRUE THAT SOMEONE MISTOOK ME FOR TOKIWA-SAMA IN THE DARKNESS
NAOSHI-SAN ISN'T AS SHE DESCRIBED HIM.
THAT IS WHY TOKIWA-SAMA COULD NOT GO OUT AND ORDERED ME TO ACCOMPANY HER INSTEAD.
THE RELATIVES BROUGHT NAOSHI-SAMA WITH THEM.

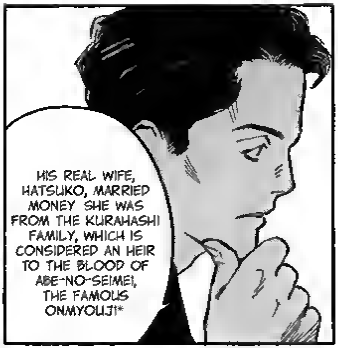
NAOSHI-SAMA KNEW VERY WELL THAT IT WAS ME WHO WAS ACCOMPANYING KIKUE
I SWEAR,
WHAT A HISTORY THIS FAMILY HAS!
YES
THERE WAS THE FLAMING DEMON AND YAMIGOZEN.
ISN'T THERE SOME RELATION BETWEEN THE UPROAR THE FAMILY IS IN AND THE ATTACK ON TAKATSUKASA-SAN AND SAKICHI-SAN?
BESIDES SAKICHI MAY SAY WHAT HE WILL, BUT IF HE REALLY WAS MISTAKEN FOR TOKIWA-SAN.

IS IT POSSIBLE IT'S ALL JUST AN ATTEMPT ON THE LIFE OF WHOEVER INHERITS?
YES
YOU MEAN A RIOT INSIDE THE FAMILY?
HOW-EVER,
NAOSHI-SAN WAS TO-GETHER WITH TOKIWA-SAN, RIGHT?
BUT AFTER HE LEFT, HE MAY HAVE GONE TO GINZA.
I THINK IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW LONG NAOSHI-SAN WAS WITH TOKIWA-SAN.

...
YOU MUST BE RIGHT
HIRA-KAWA!
HERE, THIS IS WHAT YOU ASKED FOR
SO WHY ARE YOU INVESTIGAT-ING THE TAKATSU-KASA FAMILY NOW?
WEREN'T YOU AFTER YAMIGOZEN AND THE FLAMING DEMON?
THANKS
WELL, FOR MANY REASONS.
THIS IS A MAP OF USHIG-OME.
WHAT IN THE WORLD DO YOU EXPECT TO FIND?
WHO KNOWS?
I'LL GO CHECK IT OUT ANYWAY


WHEN HE WAS ABOUT SIXTEEN, HE LEFT HOME AND WENT TO YOKOHAMA. EVER SINCE THEN, HE WAS TRAVELLING BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN KYOTO AND YOKOHAMA.
WELL, HE AND HIS FATHER WERE ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY, SO IT'S NOT AS IF THEY REALLY HAD A BLOOD-RELATION.
FIRST ABOUT LORD HIROMICHI HE WAS FROM THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY SUPPORTING THE OPENING OF JAPAN TO THE WORLD. HE HAD A BAD RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS GRANDFATHER SUKEHIRO WHO STRONGLY SUPPORTED EXPULSION OF ALL *BARBARIAN FOREIGNERS

OF COURSE, THE MARRIAGE WAS DECIDED BY SUKEHIRO, BUT I DON'T UNDER-STAND VERY WELL WHAT HIS GOAL WAS.
THERE WAS A GREAT DIFFERENCE OF SOCIAL STATUS BETWEEN HER AND THE TAKAT-SUKASA HOUSE.


HIS REAL WIFE, HATSUKO, MARRIED MONEY. SHE WAS FROM THE KURAHASHI FAMILY, WHICH IS CONSIDERED AN HEIR TO THE BLOOD OF ABE-NO-SEIMEI, THE FAMOUS ONMYOUJI*

*NOTE. FOR MORE INFO, LOOK HERE HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/ABE_NO_SEIMEI

LORD HIROMICHI WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE "SHIKOU CLUB," GATHERING MERCHANTS TRADING OVERSEAS AND FOREIGNERS RESIDING IN JAPAN.
THE BOAT DISAPPEARED FROM ONE OF THE JETTIES THAT BELONGED TO THEM.
WHERE SHE BOARDED ALONE A SMALL BOAT AND WENT OUT INTO THE SEA. SHE NEVER RETURNED
SHE HAD GONE TO THE VILLA IN YOKO-HAMA,
BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT HER DEATH.
THIS HATSUKO LADY DIED LAST YEAR,
AND THE NEXT DAY, IN THE AFTERNOON, HATSUKO'S CORPSE WAS ALSO FOUND
THE NEXT DAY, IT WAS DISCOVERED EMPTY AND DRIFTING AIMLESSLY.
DON'T YOU FIND THIS A VERY SUGGESTIVE STORY?
ABSO-LUTELY
..NO ONE HAD SEEN LADY HATSUKO GO OUT TO SEA.
IT MIGHT BE BECAUSE THERE WAS FOG AND THE VISIBILITY WAS BAD, BUT..

1876 YEAR, THE FOURTH OF JUNE, TWO ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN WERE BORN. CHIYO, A DAUGHTER OF THE CHOUSHUU FEUDAL LORDS, DESCENDANTS OF THE MOURI FAMILY, GIVES BIRTH TO NAOHIRO.*
SAWA, DAUGHTER OF YOKOHAMA MERCHANTS, GIVES BIRTH TO TOKIWA-SAN.
*NOTE THE CHARACTER FOR "NAOSHI" IS THE SAME AS THE "NAO" IN NAOHIRO
EXCEPT LADY HATSUKO, THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE THREE CONCUBINES, TOO.
THE THIRD ONE, KOZATO, WAS FROM KYOTO
SHE WAS RELATED TO LADY HATSUKO
SHE RETURNED TO KYOTO WHEN THE ELDER DAUGHTER WAS BORN
IT SEEMS THAT LORD HIROMICHI WENT ALL THE WAY TO KYOTO TO SEE HER
HER DAUGHTER IS PROBABLY ENTERED IN THE FAMILY REGISTER, TOO*.
IN THAT CASE,
HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS WOMAN MUST HAVE BEEN VERY DEEP AND INTIMATE.
THAT'S HOW IT SEEMS
AH, I THINK WE'RE HERE
*NOTE. AT THE TIME GIRLS WEREN'T USUALLY ENTERED IN THE FAMILY REGISTER BECAUSE THEY DID NOT HAVE ANY RIGHTS, LIKE INHERITING AND SO ON

SO NAOSHI-SAN MOVED HERE AS SOON AS LORD HIROMICHI DIED, RIGHT?
AS REASON FOR THE DISINHERITANCE IS GIVEN THAT HE IS CRITICAL TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT AND TENDS TO INJURE AND UNDERMINE THE POSITIONS OF THE NOBILITY.
AT LEAST, THAT'S ONLY LADY HATSUKO'S POINT OF VIEW...
RIGHT.
AFTER THAT, LADY HATSUKO HAS BEEN IGNORING HIS EXISTENCE ALMOST COMPLETELY, SO SHE MUST HAVE HATED HIM QUITE A LOT.
I WONDER WHY SHE HATED HIM SO MUCH...
BUT, HE WAS ONLY ELEVEN OR SO AT THE TIME HE MOVED HERE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE WOULD HAVE DISPLAYED SUCH TRAITS AT SUCH AN AGE...
YOU'VE GOT THAT RIGHT.

ON THE OTHER HAND, LADY HATSUKO GREATLY FAVOURED TOKIWA-SAN.
SHE TOOK HIM TO SOCIAL GATHERINGS EVEN WHEN HE WAS STILL NOT OF AGE AND SHE INTRO-DUCED HIM AS THE NEXT DUKE
SHE MADE BOTH HER FAMILY AND THE REST OF NOBILITY ACCEPT TOKIWA-SAN AS NEXT IN LINE FOR THE TITLE.
THAT WAS A VERY DIFFERENT TREATMENT...
...

EVEN IF HE DID BECOME A REBEL, IS IT REALLY ANY WONDER?
YOU'RE RIGHT
NAOSHI-SAN IS DESCRIBED AS WAYWARD NOBILITY,
BUT HE WAS TAKEN IN BY HATSUKO-SAMA RIGHT AFTER HE WAS BORN AND THEN TOSSED ASIDE WHEN HE WAS JUST ELEVEN.
IT'S ALL TOO CONVENIENT FOR NAOSHI-SAN.
AND TOKIWA-SAN'S ATTACK BY YAMIGOZEN.
AND THEN COMES HATSUKO-SAMA'S UNTIMELY DEATH
THAT'S HOW IT SEEMS TO BE.

NAOSHI-SAN'S HOUSE MUST BE HERE SOME-WHERE..
AH, EXCUSE ME!
TAKAT-SUKASA-SAMA?
I DON'T THINK WE HAVE A HOUSE WITH SUCH A FAMOUS NAME ON IT.
IS THAT SO..
IF NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT IT,
IT MUST BE A VERY QUIET AND SECRET HOUSE..
NOT REALLY.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE ASKING FOR THE TAKAT-SUKASA NAME
IF YOU TRY NAKAHATA, ANYONE WOULD POINT YOU TO IT
SO,
WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?
EHM,
I'M HIRAKAWA FROM TEITO NIPPOU—
WHAT DOES A RE-PORTER FROM A POPULAR NEWSPAPER WANT HERE?

!
EXCUSE ME, BUT WHO ARE YOU?
NAKA-HATA NAOSHI
ALTHOUGH THERE ARE VERY RARE OCCASIONS WHEN I'M CALLED TAKATSUKASA NAOHIRO

"TOUKEI IBUN" Volume 1, The End

帝都・東京を震撼させる
連続殺人事件……
火炎魔人、闇御前の
狙いは一体……？

元摂関家鷹司の次男・常とその使用人が襲われたことから、事件の狙いが鷹司家という可能性が出てきた。新太郎と万造は、鷹司家の長男・直の元を訪れ、嫡子のいない鷹司家の複雑な事情を訊く。そして、ついに直までが闇御前に襲われ……!?

次巻［東京異聞］第2巻へつづく